

Transformative Community Engagement for Sustainable Regeneration



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Abstract

Community engagement in regeneration is an important way to ensure that residents in deprived neighbourhoods have a say in decisions that affect them. The aim of this research is to provide a critical examination of community engagement through the development of practice and strategy of a UK housing association to deliver neighbourhood regeneration in a deprived neighbourhood in North West England. An action research approach using interlinked inquiry streams was undertaken with residents, senior managers and practitioners. The findings were used to develop community engagement strategy, articulate a model of engagement practice and enable the residents' lived experience and views on service providers to be heard.

Most literature about community engagement in regeneration is critical about the limited involvement of residents in partnerships, meetings and consultations. However, little attention has been paid to the exploration of transformative engagement where the process and outcome of engagement seeks to empower and enable self-determination of residents. This research addresses this gap and also further explores informal and creative engagement methods, the skills required for engagement practice, the role of housing associations in neighbourhood management and considerations for housing associations undertaking community engagement to achieve a lasting impact for people and place.

This thesis has contributed to knowledge in two ways. The first contribution is the adaptation of Andrews and Turner's (2006) Consumerist and Participatory Framework for the analysis of community engagement in a housing association context. The adapted framework is valuable in identifying different types of engagement approach within organisations. This framework addresses the gap in knowledge about the development of community engagement strategy. The second contribution to knowledge is the creation of a model of transformative community engagement practice, based on an extended definition of neighbourhood sustainability, the literature review and research findings.

The research discusses the implications for housing associations undertaking community engagement in the current context, which is of particular relevance given the impact of UK public sector cuts and welfare benefit changes to poorer communities. Findings can be transferred to other housing providers or agencies looking to engage residents to achieve sustainable outcomes that will improve their lives and local neighbourhoods.

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Glossary

ALMO – Arms Length Management Organisation

CE – Community Engagement

CDO – Community Development Officer

CI – Cooperative Inquiry

CIT – Customer Involvement Team

HA – Housing Association

HAO – Housing Arts Officer

HCA – Homes and Communities Agency, the UK social housing regulator

HDW – Health Development Worker

IDS – Industrial Doctoral Scheme (joint project between Bolton at Home and University of Bolton)

LSPs – Local Strategic Partnerships

Mr One Million – Arts project for 18-24 unemployed men in Breightmet

NDC – New Deal for Communities

NL – New Labour Government

NM – Neighbourhood Management

NMT – Neighbourhood Management Team (refers to Breightmet NMT)

PhotoBreightmet – Photographer in Residence project in Breightmet

RSL – Registered Social Landlord

ST – Stock Transfer

The Breightmet Puzzle – name given to the situation where residents agree to take part but do not attend without explanation

TOB Together – Top O’ Th’ Brow Together, a Breightmet community group

TRA – Tenant and Residents Association

UCAN Centre – Urban Care and Neighbourhood Centre

Preface: Personal background

As a resident of Greater Manchester for over 14 years, I have witnessed numerous regeneration initiatives in disadvantaged areas across the North West of England to improve neighbourhoods and people's quality of life. During the time of the Labour Governments (1997-2010), I became curious to know what impact these schemes were having on the lives of existing residents and the extent to which new initiatives addressed complex social and economic needs in poorer areas. I questioned the extent to which people in regeneration areas were meaningfully engaged by agencies and service providers, and empowered to have a say about what was happening to their homes and neighbourhoods. Having spoken to many service users and residents in previous research and voluntary positions, I was keen to undertake research to explore the development of the relationship between agencies delivering regeneration and residents, the driving force behind such initiatives and the impact and value of such schemes.

Another important influence on my inquiry has been my involvement with City West Housing Trust. During my research, I became a Tenant Board Member of the Trust, a Housing Association that owns and manages the social housing in West Salford. From this experience, I have developed a wealth of knowledge about the work of a registered social landlord, through my involvement in a governance and scrutiny capacity on the Board and the Audit and Risk Committee. This has led me to develop a broad understanding of the social housing sector and the work of housing associations in deprived areas, which has informed the research.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of my thesis and contextual information about social housing, neighbourhood regeneration, and community engagement. It explains the current policy context, rationale for choosing the topic and background to my inquiry with Bolton at Home Housing Association. I discuss Bolton at Home's approach to regeneration delivery and provide brief details about the deprived local area of Brightmet, where I was based. I conclude by summarising my research approach, the gaps in knowledge regarding community engagement in regeneration, my contribution to knowledge and a chapter outline for the thesis.

1.1 Why Community Engagement in Regeneration?

There are social housing estates all over the UK that have high levels of deprivation and the people that live in them have complex economic and social needs. People are living in poverty, have lower life expectancy and experience poorer health, lower educational attainment and higher unemployment than in more affluent areas. Despite millions of pounds of public funding over the last 40 years intended to address the multi-faceted problems that exist for people and disadvantaged places, little has changed for these residents. Previous regeneration schemes have not produced the sustained impact expected by policy makers and many mistakes from past initiatives have been replicated years later. Area-based neighbourhood regeneration, in the form of Neighbourhood Management, introduced during the New Labour government, intended to offer a targeted approach to support the needs of people living in deprived areas and a partnership service delivery framework for practitioners. A fundamental aspect of the Neighbourhood Management model is community engagement and my inquiry explores the development of engagement strategy and practice by a housing association undertaking this approach to regeneration in a deprived neighbourhood in Bolton, North West England.

Housing associations are responsible for the management of social housing stock (previously council owned housing) and have always had a role within neighbourhoods as 'community investors', with some placing more emphasis on this than others (Slatter 2001). However, the role of housing associations is rapidly changing. As local government entrenches and becomes more of a commissioner of local services rather than a deliverer, housing associations are increasingly expected to fund, develop and implement services to residents, in response to local need, that go far beyond their principal role as a housing provider. This need to support deprived communities has become more acute as a result of service provision cuts to local public services, the economic recession and welfare

changes that have reduced the amount of benefit that people receive. More broadly, there are worrying societal trends that need to be reversed, such as the widening gap between rich and poor, decreasing levels of social and economic mobility, increasing child poverty and growing numbers of people accessing food banks.

The aim of the research is to provide a critical examination of community engagement through the development of practice and strategy at Bolton at Home. Bolton at Home is a UK Housing Association (HA) that undertakes social, physical and economic regeneration initiatives in the most deprived areas of Bolton in the North West of England. Brightmet is a peripheral housing estate that consists of two local authority wards in the borough of Bolton and is in the 3% of most deprived wards in England (ONS 2010). The research provides an account of the Brightmet residents' lived experience, highlighting their perspectives of the neighbourhood and views of local service providers. It explores how effective and sustained community engagement strategy and practice in neighbourhood regeneration can be developed. In summary, my contribution to knowledge is:

1. A new adaptation of Andrews and Turner's (2006) Consumerist and Participatory Framework for engagement in a housing association context;
2. A model of transformative community engagement practice for sustainable regeneration.

This contribution to knowledge can be transferred to other housing providers or agencies delivering regeneration, seeking to engage local people in neighbourhood regeneration and developing empowering ways of working to improve services, the neighbourhood and the lives of residents.

1.2 Background to Community Engagement in Regeneration

At a simplistic level, community can be used to describe a group of people living in the same area, a group sharing common values or interests, or living similar lifestyles. However, there have been numerous suggestions about the meaning ascribed to community (Yerbury 2011). As with community, there are many explanations for community engagement but there is broad agreement that engagement (also participation or involvement) describes communication, an interaction or a relationship between individuals and groups who live in a neighbourhood, and agencies or organisations who provide services in the area. Definitions of community engagement can indicate linear, narrow and passive contact between residents and service providers, where local communities are 'done to' rather than involved in an empowering and transformative process. For the purpose of this thesis, discussion about engagement centres on this definition from the National Standards of Community Engagement.

Developing and sustaining a working relationship between one or more public body and one or more community group, to help them both to understand and act on the needs or issues that the community experiences (Communities Scotland 2005: 4).

Across Western Europe, community engagement is seen as a way to tackle social problems within poor areas enabling people to participate in decisions that affect their lives (Mathers, Parry and Jones 2008). In England, both Conservative (1979-1997) and Labour governments (1997-2010) recognised the importance of regeneration in public policy to attempt to reverse the economic, social and environmental decline in poorer areas. Community engagement was a central tenet of regeneration initiatives and service development and delivery in poorer areas. These included City Challenge, Single Regeneration Budget, New Deal for Communities, Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders and Neighbourhood Management. As with the Social Inclusion Partnerships in Scotland and Communities First programme in Wales, Neighbourhood Management was based on the themes of community involvement, partnership and coordination between services (Taylor, Wilson, Purdue and Wilde 2007). This section provides background information and a historical context about social housing and neighbourhood regeneration and the current policy context.

1.2.1 Social housing and neighbourhood regeneration

Bolton at Home is a post-1997 Stock Transfer Housing Association so, in order to provide a brief introduction, the aim of this section is to outline the changing role of Housing Associations in neighbourhood regeneration. Created by the 1974 Housing Act, Registered Social Providers are social landlords registered with the Homes and Communities Agency and most are not-for-profit housing associations that own, and are responsible for, the management of social (ex-council) housing. Housing associations (HAs) have been considered by recent UK governments as the preferred mechanism for owning, managing and building social housing because their quasi privatised status allows them to borrow from financial institutions to fund investment and development (Malpass and Mullins 2002). A local authority can only transfer the social housing stock to a HA, if approval is given from national government and a ballot is held where the majority of tenants vote in favour of the transfer.

According to Hilder (2005) a neighbourhood can consist of three scales including: streets and blocks; home neighbourhoods; and public or strategic neighbourhoods. The latter definition is what Cox, Davies and Harrison (2013) describe as a defined ‘administrative static unit’ of a neighbourhood, in contrast to the collective and dynamic nature of a neighbourhood that is constructed both by residents and outsiders. In terms of policy intervention, neighbourhood regeneration uses this administrative static definition and can include strands of economic development, physical or environment improvement or social and community development (Smith 2008). It can be viewed as “the holistic process of reversing the economic, physical and social decline of places where market forces alone won’t suffice” (The Scottish Government 2011: 2).

Neighbourhood regeneration is, and always has been, part of HA activity, but housing is not always the only driver (Smith 2006). A significant number of not-for-profit housing organisations have been heavily involved in regeneration activities for a number of years. One could argue that the philanthropic work undertaken by Octavia Hill and Peabody in the 1800s to house some of the poorest residents in London had a profound impact on health, education and living standards and was a forerunner to some of the neighbourhood regeneration work done today. Community engagement and support for tenants and the wider community in the pursuit of social justice has always been an important feature of HA activity and is perhaps a unique aspect of housing associations in the UK (Smith 2006).

After the Second World War, the emphasis of urban regeneration was to build new estates, to clear the slums in the cities and provide a sense of community for the lower socio-economic groups. Many peripheral or overspill housing estates were created (such as Wythenshawe or Hattersley in Manchester), often with untested building techniques and lack of consideration for transport links, and local amenities such as shops or pubs (Bramley, Munro and Pawson 2004; Power and Mumford 1999). The 1970s saw a move in regeneration policy to improve rather than demolish social housing stock and, at this time, HAs were given greater powers and sources of funding, through Housing Action Areas to invest in their properties and tackle homelessness. The change to housing allocation policy in 1974 to focus on people in most need, combined with over two million council homes sold between 1981 and 2001, under Thatcher's Right to Buy scheme, all contributed to the view that many held that social housing was seen as less desirable than home ownership (Bramley *et al.*, 2004). The problems experienced on peripheral and inner city council estates were also exacerbated by mass unemployment, increasing levels of poverty and need, low demand for property, a high number of empty housing and high turnover, poor housing management, rising crime and social discord (Power and Mumford 1999). Bramley *et al.* (2004) suggest that neighbourhoods became further stigmatized by reputation that led, in some cases, to abandonment by residents. Some Local Authorities, for example Manchester City Council, decided on wholesale demolition and re building of its most difficult social housing estate (Hulme Crescents) as the only solution to the inadequate housing provision, concentration of crime, drugs and poverty. Despite inner city regeneration, through City Challenge and the Estate Action funding, after the riots in 1980s in major cities like Liverpool and London, the focus at this time was still on physical regeneration. Some argue this was at the expense of economic opportunities or crime and social problems experienced by local people in deprived areas (Ginsburg 1999; Foley and Martin 2000).

By the end of the 1990s, a broad consensus was developing across the UK political parties that past regeneration policies had failed to achieve any lasting impact for local people (Carley 1990; Imrie and Raco 2003). The previous focus on economic and physical development (seen by Canary Wharf) and the 'trickle down' theory of regeneration was much criticised by studies that showed little benefit of these projects for residents living in nearby poorer areas (Schaechter and Loftman 1997). The primary aim of most regeneration projects at the end of 1990s became the achievement of neighbourhood regeneration, inspired by an interest in wider urban policy objectives (Bramley *et al.* 2004). This can be seen in the Single Regeneration Budget (1994) programme that brought

together multiple funding streams and emphasised the involvement of all stakeholders in local neighbourhoods to create positive change.

The New Labour government positioned neighbourhood regeneration at the centre of public policy and created many different initiatives in targeted areas to tackle social exclusion, unemployment, poor health and education, as well as the quality of the lived environment and people's homes. An area based multi-agency and multi-sector partnership framework sought to provide a more holistic approach to neighbourhood regeneration than in the past. A key feature of regeneration programmes was the involvement of the community in the governance and delivery of the initiative. It was suggested that this would enable local people to influence decisions taking place in their neighbourhood, to ensure more successful and sustainable regeneration and more effective public services (Social Exclusion Unit 2001). New governance arrangements were created to ensure community engagement in these initiatives, such as Local Area Partnerships, and legislation required statutory services to engage local people to contribute to the successful implementation of programmes and services (DCLG 2008). An overwhelmingly important objective of the Labour Government was "to avoid a repetition of 'unsustainable' regeneration, not least in terms of securing value for money" (Bramley *et al.* 2004: 201).

Despite the lack of directly allocated funding to them at this time, many HAs went beyond their 'landlord' function and undertook neighbourhood regeneration in their wider role as 'community investors' (Slatter 2001). This involves working with tenants and residents to support skills and employment; using art and sport in regeneration; and working with community groups, schools, families, shop owners, and young people (Slatter 2001; Card and Mudd 2006). McArthur (1995) contends that the reason why many HAs are involved in non-housing related activity is due to a mix of self-interest to retain the asset value of the housing stock they own, and a moral purpose to regenerate the local economy for the benefit of tenants and also "reflect the requirements of founding local authorities" (Pawson and Fancy 2003: 6). Past work has indicated the potential risks for housing associations prioritising investment in neighbourhood regeneration and tackling social exclusion ahead of other important corporate objectives such as achieving greater affordability and building new homes (Pawson and Fancy 2003). Housing Associations therefore need to "exercise care and discretion in deciding whether they should exercise a wider role and if so when, where and how" (Smith and Paterson 1999: 8).

Some HAs like Bolton at Home were responsible for delivering a Neighbourhood Management model in partnership with local councils and other organisations. Neighbourhood Management (NM) was created by the past Labour government (1997-2010) to place greater emphasis on the neighbourhood as “a focus for participation and reshaping of service delivery” (Taylor *et al.* 2007: 4). The Neighbourhood Management model was one aspect of the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal that stated “within 10-20 years no one should be disadvantaged by where they live” (Social Exclusion Unit 2001: 24). The government proposed that local government modernisation, improved service delivery and community engagement with agencies would empower local people to create positive and sustainable change in their neighbourhood (Social Exclusion Unit, 2001). The Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders trialled the approach and in 2005, it was rolled out nationally to all local authorities. Neighbourhood Management aimed to bring together all relevant service providers in the local area, to develop and mainstream services, engage with residents and ‘narrow the gap’ between the poorest neighbourhoods and the richest (Power 2004). This work was badly needed as research showed that “those renting social housing are within the poorest two fifths of the overall income distribution, living in areas with the highest rates of multiple deprivation” (Hills 2007: 2).

1.2.2 The current policy context

When the UK coalition government came to power in 2010, a strong political desire for local people to hold decision makers to account and become less reliant on state support became evident (Cameron 2010). This move away from a narrative of community engagement to localism meant that recent research about the involvement of local people in decision making in disadvantaged areas has tended to focus on the Big Society, citizenship and community budgets (for example, Richardson 2012). In addition the coalition government swiftly stopped funding for renewal programmes on gaining office, such as Area Based Grant, Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders and Working Neighbourhoods Fund. Regeneration in public policy has since been noticeably absent, meaning that for the first time in forty years, there were no area-based initiatives in the most deprived areas in England (Crowley, Balaram and Lee 2012). A Select Committee for Regeneration gave a damning verdict on the Government’s policies for regeneration and the Chair concluded:

The Government has cut public funding for regeneration programmes dramatically and has produced no adequate 'strategy' for regeneration sufficient to tackle the deep-seated problems faced by our most deprived communities (Betts 2011).

The Big Society policy was introduced by David Cameron in 2010 and had three main strands, to support voluntary work, philanthropic activity and social action, public sector reform giving other sectors opportunities to deliver public services and community empowerment (The Cabinet Office 2010). The Big Society was heavily criticised as the government has been accused of reducing the size and scope of public and voluntary sectors to deliver services, and ignoring the impact that the public spending cuts are having on the poorest in society (Stott 2011; Stephenson and Trades Union Congress 2011). The introduction of the Localism Act (2011) aimed to give new rights and power to communities and individuals and ensure the planning system became more democratic and effective and that decisions were taken on a local basis (DCLG 2011). However, some are sceptical about how local people can become more involved when cuts to local government and the voluntary and community sector have affected community capacity for engagement and there is a lack of resources or practical mechanisms, especially in deprived neighbourhoods (Betts 2011).

In terms of housing policy, the demand for houses has increased but the lowest number of homes built since 1924 was recorded in 2011 (Chartered Institute of Housing 2013) and, even with the Help to Buy scheme, critics say this has not increased supply of houses (Robertson 2013). Social housing waiting lists are growing and homelessness has risen sharply in England (Shelter 2013). The government abolished both the Tenants Services Authority and Audit Commission responsible for regulating the social housing sector which is now done by the Homes and Communities Agency. A co-regulation framework has been created where tenants are responsible for scrutinising their Housing Association on issues of service quality, value for money and the finances of the business (HCA 2012). The government is increasingly interested in how housing associations can deliver more housing, but has limited the amount of grant available, so more pressure is on HAs to borrow more from the financial sector to support new build programmes.

Welfare Reform has had the most significant impact on both housing associations and social housing tenants for over 50 years (Wilson, Morgan, Rahman and Vaid 2013). Two aspects in the Welfare Reform Act (2012) include the Under-Occupancy Subsidy Removal and Universal Credit. The reduction of Housing Benefit for under-occupancy of social housing, the so-called 'Bedroom Tax' (Bird 2013) means that, for one bedroom that is under occupied, tenants will lose £14 a week from their housing benefit and £22 for two bedrooms. Since its introduction in April 2013, this is already having a detrimental impact on tenants who have spare bedrooms. In some instances, tenants may want to move to a smaller property that may not be available and most of whom are already struggling

financially (Beatty and Fothergill 2013). Housing Associations have experienced rising rent arrears, and evictions and staff are encountering a greater number of tenants who are suicidal (Stockdale 2014).

Universal Credit, introduced in October 2014, replaces Housing Benefit, Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), Income Support, Child Tax Credits and Working Tax Credits with one payment, paid monthly, direct to tenants. In the current system, Housing Benefit is paid straight to housing providers, so this represents a massive threat to housing associations' income stream (rent). It also impacts on the strength and viability of the housing association as a business, and the level of risk that can be afforded with regard to new build programmes and spending on neighbourhood regeneration that may not have an economic return. The Child Poverty Action Group has also warned that poor families faced a 'triple whammy' of benefit, support and service cuts, stating that "The coalition government's legacy threatens to be the worst poverty record of any government for a generation" (cited in Jones 2012: viii).

The need for economic development, physical and environmental improvement and work to address social and health issues has and will not reduce. Despite a lack of funding from central government, regeneration and community engagement with residents is still happening in deprived areas but on a much reduced scale. As outlined, government policy and the macroeconomic context have had a substantial negative impact on many social housing tenants and levels of poverty in already deprived neighbourhoods. The current government's lack of emphasis on neighbourhood regeneration does indicate a change in role for organisations with a strong local presence, such as housing associations, as they are expected to tackle these complex and deep rooted problems with partners in increasingly difficult economic times, with less resources. Housing associations and other agencies delivering services and seeking to engage local people are, therefore, facing ever greater challenges to achieving any impact in deprived areas, much less outcomes that prove sustainable. My research aims to address these issues and discuss the wider implications of housing associations delivering neighbourhood regeneration and engaging residents living in disadvantaged places.

1.3 Background to the Research and Local Context

This section introduces Bolton at Home; a UK housing association based in the North West of England, its regeneration work, and the Brightmet neighbourhood where I was based with the Neighbourhood Management Team. Bolton at Home Housing Association owns and manages social housing for Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council in the post industrial town of Bolton and has been widely recognized for both its housing and regeneration work (Lewis and Maitland 2005). The housing stock consists of flats and houses on various housing estates around the town, comprised mainly of social housing tenants and owner occupiers and some private rental properties. Bolton at Home became a UK housing association (HA) in 2010, following a stock transfer ballot, where tenants voted for the creation of the HA to own and manage their properties.

1.3.1 Bolton at Home housing association

Bolton at Home's approach to regeneration places great emphasis on improving both the environment and quality of life for the communities it serves by working in partnership with other agencies, particularly the local council (Thomson 2010). In addition to building new properties and investing in existing housing stock, Bolton at Home has a strong commitment to community engagement and has created a number of services and mechanisms to deliver neighbourhood regeneration with partner agencies in the most deprived areas in the borough. The Housing Percent for Art programme was established by Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council in the 1990s and uses creative and innovative methods to engage local people. Bolton at Home funds four Arts Officers who commission artists to work with local people on arts projects to develop social and community regeneration in areas and support improvements to housing stock.

Bolton at Home created the first Urban Care and Neighbourhood (UCAN) Centre in 1999 to engage with local residents regarding physical improvement work. Rapidly, it became a community resource where staff and residents could identify and tackle issues in the neighbourhood; to work with local services to develop needed services and where local people could seek help, advice and support. Since then, UCAN Centres have been 'mainstreamed' and there are now six in the borough, supported by Bolton Council, Bolton at Home and partners. They offer free use of a telephone and computers, access to work clubs, Bolton's credit union, social activities, support to local residents and opportunities to get involved with projects.

Bolton at Home has delivered Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council's Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy since 2009 and still supports the Neighbourhood Management model for Regeneration introduced during the last Labour government. Community engagement is considered central to the successful delivery of neighbourhood regeneration using this model (Taylor 2000; Duncan and Thomas 2001). Neighbourhood Management Teams have been created in each of the four deprived areas where Bolton at Home has the majority of its housing stock. The teams are responsible for 'narrowing the gap' between the poorer and more affluent communities in the borough by developing services to tackle interrelated issues of health and wellbeing, employment, education and training, and the environment. The Neighbourhood Management Teams are based in the local area for which they are responsible and work with schools, churches, children's centres, community groups, council services, health and social care services, the job centre, the citizen's advice bureau, and local councillors. A Neighbourhood Manager works strategically with these partners to commission and deliver services and the team engage with practitioners on an operational level (Taylor 2000).

Bolton at Home is in an unusual position as a housing association leading on the delivery of Neighbourhood Management but also by the continued financial investment in this type of neighbourhood regeneration model by Bolton Metropolitan Council. This is despite the Council experiencing a reduction of 25% of its budget in 2011, following central government cuts to local government expenditure. This resulted in up to 1,500 people being made redundant in order to make savings of £60 million (Manchester Evening News 2011). The research discusses how this has had a significant impact on neighbourhood service delivery, changed the role of Bolton at Home in neighbourhood management and the nature of engagement with residents in Brightmet.

1.3.2 Local context - Brightmet

Brightmet is an estate in east Bolton and has a population of 14,000 people. There are, approximately, 5,700 households in the neighbourhood, consisting of both social housing tenants and owner occupiers (Bolton Council 2007). Brightmet ranks in the 3% of the most deprived wards in England in terms of income deprivation, health, education and employment deprivation - 827th out of over 33,000 wards in England (Office for National Statistics 2010). Figures from Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council data reveal the scale of poverty, unemployment and ill health experienced by residents:

- Over half the population in South Brightmet have a household income of less than £10,000;

- 51% of working age in the area are not in paid employment;
- 26.9% of people of working age are claiming benefits compared to the borough average of 18%;
- Brightmet has worse educational attainment levels at GCSE compared to other local deprived areas;
- The life expectancy for someone living in Brightmet is 5 years less than the borough average;
- A high number of people suffer with mental health issues (Bolton Council 2007).

Other problems known to exist to practitioners working in the neighbourhood, although not captured by surveys, include high instances of crime and anti-social behaviour not reported to police; significant amounts of personal debt and problems with door step lenders and loan sharks; high levels of domestic abuse; and low levels of literacy and numeracy among adults. In addition, the area still carries a reputation of being an unsafe neighbourhood and a place to avoid among those who live in other parts of the borough. Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council and Bolton at Home are working, in partnership, with other agencies at a neighbourhood level to empower the people who live in Brightmet to take more responsibility for the quality of their lives and neighbourhood and, by doing so, address and resolve these issues.

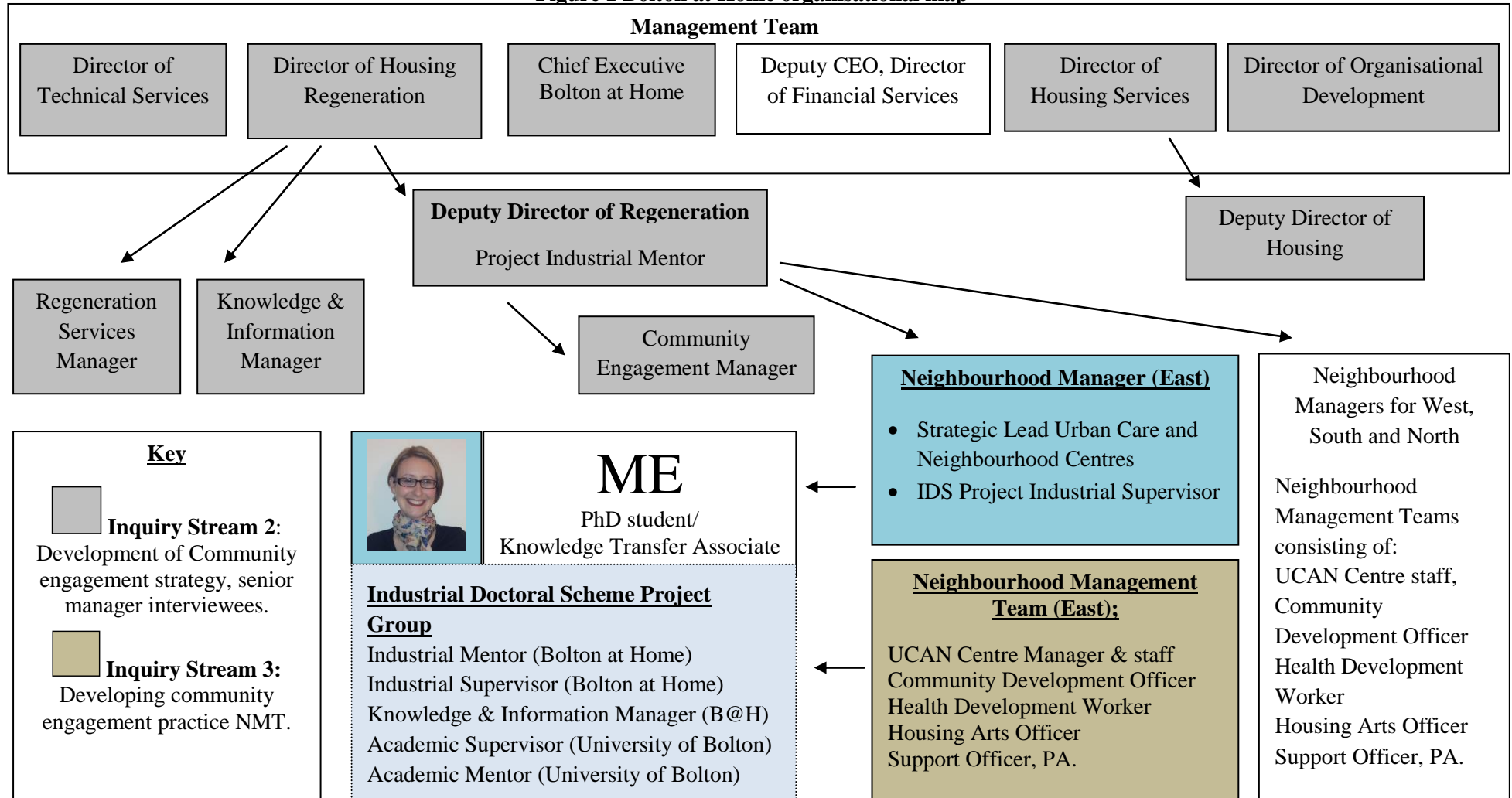
Despite the years of experience of working in deprived neighbourhoods, the Neighbourhood Management Team (NMT) was finding it very difficult to connect with local residents, in 2009. Anecdotally this lack of engagement success was attributed to a number of factors, including local people being apathetic and lacking an appetite or enthusiasm for involvement in community activity and inappropriate engagement methods used by service providers to connect with residents that meant any potential interest from local people could not be capitalised. It was suggested that agencies found engagement in Brightmet was too time-consuming and difficult so practitioners decided to go elsewhere to achieve more favourable results in neighbourhoods with a higher level of community and service provider interaction. The Brightmet Neighbourhood Manager decided a new approach to engagement was needed in the area, to develop practice and explore innovative ways to deliver services that responded to local need, and this is how the research was created.

1.3.3 The Industrial Doctoral Scheme Project

The Neighbourhood Manager of the Brightmet neighbourhood met with me in 2009 to discuss the challenges that existed for practitioners in engaging with local people. They were interested in how a research project might assist their team and Bolton at Home in developing community engagement practice to improve the lives of residents in Brightmet and elsewhere. Following further discussions, a three year Industrial Doctoral Scheme (IDS) project was funded by Bolton at Home and developed with the University of Bolton, to explore community engagement practice in regeneration. The Industrial Doctoral Scheme was created with the aim of transferring knowledge between the University and Bolton at Home (Nelson 2010) and was a vehicle for my PhD research. I became a Knowledge Transfer Associate undertaking a PhD in May 2010 and was based full-time in Brightmet with the Neighbourhood Management Team East. The Brightmet Neighbourhood Manager took the role of Industrial Supervisor, responsible for overseeing my day to day activities whilst based at Bolton at Home. The IDS Project Team consisted of both staff from Bolton at Home and colleagues from the University and provided a steer to the projects through quarterly meetings over three years. I provided feedback to the IDS Project Team on my findings and produced a series of reports for the IDS project (Fox 2010a-e; Fox 2012).

Figure 1 shows an organisational chart highlighting where I was located within Bolton at Home. The downward arrows indicate line managerial responsibilities and horizontal arrows show the collaborative working relationships. Bolton at Home staff that formed the Industrial Doctoral scheme project group are shown. Staff with grey shading were participants in Inquiry Stream 2: Developing Community Engagement Strategy. The Neighbourhood Management Team, in green, took part in Inquiry Stream 3: Developing Community Engagement Practice.

Figure 1 Bolton at Home organisational map



1.4 My Research Inquiry

The research emerged as a result of the need for staff at Bolton at Home to enhance their understanding of community engagement practice and to ensure that activities and resources were to be used effectively and achieve sustainable regeneration outcomes. This section describes the concept of sustainability in regeneration, the research objectives and the scope of my inquiry.

1.4.1 Sustainability in regeneration

Sustainable regeneration is important for all those living and working in deprived neighbourhoods. It is a core function of Bolton at Home and, in its strategy, the organisation “recognises the importance of creating sustainable diverse communities through regeneration” (Thomson 2010: 1). The imperative to enhance existing neighbourhoods is based on three related reasons. Firstly, to fulfil a moral purpose, as mentioned earlier. Secondly to satisfy economic objectives and ensure interventions provide value for money and a return on investment and lastly to reduce public expenditure on services and support in future years. Sustainable regeneration also means improving people’s quality of life, environment, and opportunities, and developing resilience in neighbourhoods to adapt to changing times.

The Brundtland Report proposed an idea of sustainability within the field of Sustainable Development concerned with the balance between economic, social and environmental concerns and the need to limit the negative impact of development and way of life on the natural world (WCED 1987). Within the context of neighbourhood regeneration, there are numerous studies that discuss the apparent failure of regeneration interventions over the last 30 years to create positive, lasting and sustainable change in neighbourhoods and improvement in quality of life measures for existing residents (for example, Edwards 1997; Foley and Martin 2000; Imrie and Raco 2003; Smith 2008). Researchers have also criticised past regeneration initiatives for the attention paid to economic and physical aspects of place, rather than policies supporting social and community development of people (Schaechter and Loftman 1997; Ginsburg 1999; Henderson, Bowlby and Raco 2007). Colantonio, Dixon, Ganser, Carpenter and Ngombe (2009: 4) suggest that an enhanced understanding of social sustainability in regeneration is required that encompasses “the social realm of individuals and societies, which ranges from capacity building and skills development, to environmental and spatial inequalities”. This definition of sustainability in regeneration is used within the research to encapsulate the multi-faceted nature of neighbourhoods, people and communities.

There is a substantial amount of analysis regarding the best way to deliver sustainability in regeneration and the critical success factors (Joseph Rowntree Foundation 1998; Taylor *et al.* 2007; Cox *et al* 2013). The need to determine “how sustainability is made real” in neighbourhood regeneration (Lombardi, Porter, Barber and Rogers 2010: 275) through a process of developing strategy and transformative engagement practice, is explored within the inquiry.

1.4.2 Research objectives

The aim of the research is to provide a critical examination of community engagement through the development of strategy and practice at Bolton at Home. The research uses an action research approach with residents, managers and practitioners to explore the following objectives:

- 1. Characterise the lived experience of residents of the Breightmet neighbourhood and the experience of community engagement with Bolton at Home;*
- 2. Conceptualise the model of community engagement practice used by the Neighbourhood Management Team to engage local residents in Breightmet;*
- 3. Explore the implications for organisations and practitioners in implementing this model of community engagement practice;*
- 4. Analyse the strategic implications for Bolton at Home and other UK housing associations in seeking to engage the community in regeneration activities and projects;*
- 5. Examine the extent to which the research has helped to develop organisational community engagement strategy and practice and enable the voices of residents to be heard.*

The research identifies and explores further gaps in knowledge about identifying and developing skills for engagement practice in neighbourhood management for housing association staff; the role of housing associations in neighbourhood management and community engagement practice undertaken by a housing association to achieve sustainable regeneration.

1.4.3 Scope of the research

There are a number of areas I have not included within the scope of the research, given the constraints of this study and lack of relevance to the context in which I was based. These are:

- Delivery of regeneration by Arm's Length Management Organisations (ALMOs) or the private sector;
- An evaluation of the Neighbourhood Management model of regeneration;
- Partnerships or the nature of partner involvement in neighbourhood regeneration;
- Engagement for neighbourhood governance or concerning local people attending formal meetings, or involved in political or citizen participation mechanisms;
- Role of residents or councillors on partnerships or boards, residents associations, involvement of people and agencies in Local Strategic partnerships, area forums, Police and Communities Together (PACT) meetings;
- Social cohesion, Black and Minority Ethnic issues, or impact of immigration in deprived areas;
- Use of social media or online mechanisms to engage with local people.

1.5 My Research Approach

It was important that the research process should be highly participative to generate knowledge, and take action to promote social analysis and democratic social change (Greenwood and Levin 2007). Collaborative action research is different to other types of research approach because it is a democratic process (Greenwood and Levin 1998) where research is done 'with' people rather than 'on' or 'for' them (Heron and Reason 2001). The role of the 'subject' is, therefore, one of 'participant' or 'co-researcher', co-producing and constructing knowledge in a reflective process facilitated by the researcher. This participation is, according to Reason and Bradbury (2001), critical to both the process and outcomes of action research, which they assert, aims to achieve "Practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people and more generally, the flourishing of individuals, persons and their communities" (Reason and Bradbury 2001: 11). Acknowledging the need for a systemic approach to both regeneration and the inquiry, I chose to undertake the research with staff at different levels within Bolton at Home, as well as residents. This approach was collaborative, emergent and responsive to the context. This allowed the utilisation of different methods of data collection and analysis.

The three inquiry streams are each addressed separately in a chapter of my thesis:

- Inquiry Stream 1: The Residents' Lived Experience – inquiry conducted with residents of Brightmet in a neighbourhood setting;
- Inquiry Stream 2: Development of Community Engagement Strategy working with senior managers in Bolton at Home;
- Inquiry Stream 3: Developing Community Engagement Practice with the Neighbourhood Management Team of Bolton at Home, based in their offices and a community centre in Breightmet.

A dynamic and emergent research design was developed that could adapt to a specific organisational and community environment in changing times. A simple action research cycle consists of a continuous spiral of acting and reflecting and I adapted Burns (2007: 12) and Coghlan and Brannick (2010: 8) to create a flexible process to the inquiries (Figure 2). This would ensure that the research could adapt to suit the needs of the participants and respond to unforeseen issues and events.

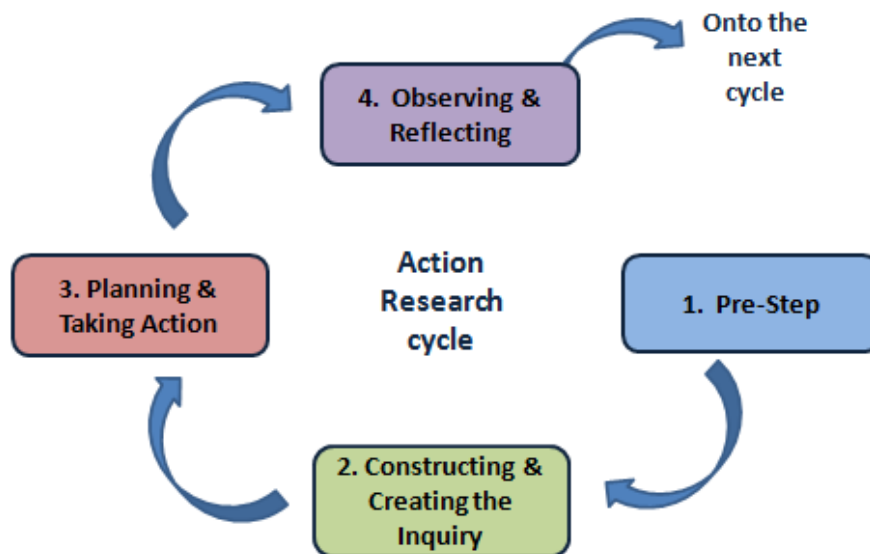


Figure 2 Action Research cycle

1.6 Contribution to Knowledge

The aim of the research is to provide a critical examination of community engagement through the development of practice and strategy at Bolton at Home. It explores how effective and sustained community engagement practice and strategy in neighbourhood regeneration may be developed. The research addresses two gaps in knowledge. Firstly the gap in the literature about an engagement model of practice that is transformative for residents and uses informal and innovative methods rather than instrumental or representative approaches that rely on the use of meetings and consultations. Secondly, the research addresses the gap in the literature about how housing associations can develop engagement strategy. Therefore my contribution to knowledge is as follows:

1. A new adaptation of Andrews and Turner's (2006) Consumerist and Participatory Framework for engagement in a housing association context;
2. A model of transformative community engagement practice for sustainable regeneration.

1.7 Overview

Chapter 2 Literature Review of Community Engagement in Regeneration is divided into five parts. Firstly, I highlight the literature about community engagement. Secondly the organisational perspective of developing community engagement strategy and practice is explored. Thirdly, I discuss the work by academics and practitioners to conceptualise sustainability in a regeneration context. Fourthly the literature about neighbourhood management is reviewed and lastly the resident experience of regeneration and resident voice is examined. I end the chapter by summarising my theoretical and conceptual framework that guided the inquiry streams with staff and residents.

My Research Approach is presented in **Chapter 3** and the rationale for using action research is explained to explore this subject. I suggest how this approach aligned with my principles as a researcher and the inquiry context and enabled me to fulfil my research objectives. I explain my use of inquiry streams and the action research cycle and discuss the data collection methods and analysis used. Using Reason and Bradbury's (2001) characteristics of action research and dimensions of a participatory worldview, an explanation is given as to why action research was the most suitable approach to adopt.

In **Chapter 4**, the process and outcomes are discussed of **Inquiry Stream 1: Residents' lived experience**. Findings are presented from interviews with former Brightmet practitioners who worked in the area in 1990s and 2000s and interviews and informal discussions with residents of Brightmet. The lived experience of local people, views of the area and of service providers are discussed and barriers to engagement and implications for practice are identified. The challenges associated with door knocking as an engagement method and the process of attempting to set up a participatory action research critical reference group with residents are highlighted.

The **Development of Community Engagement Strategy** is explored in **Chapter 5**. This chapter presents Inquiry Stream 2 that focused on the organisation and the development of community engagement strategy. I worked with senior managers at Bolton at Home to gather data on conceptions of community engagement to enable the organisation to better recognise the different approaches to engagement. This work led to a revision of the Community Engagement Strategy. My reflection considers the role of an action researcher when sponsored by an organisation, the need to be aware of power relations and the nature of participation in action research in this setting.

Within **Chapter 6** I provide an account of Inquiry stream 3 **Developing Community Engagement Practice** with the Neighbourhood Management Team. Following a collective process to reflect on the learning gained from engaging in Brightmet, I highlight the aspects of their model of engagement and discuss the challenges to implementing it. I reflect upon the intention to create a highly collaborative inquiry with the team and the extent to which this was successfully implemented.

The **Discussion** in **Chapter 7** draws together the findings from all three Inquiry Streams and explains how the research objectives have been fulfilled. Having identified key themes from my findings, I discuss the salient points with reference to the literature, the implications and reflections about the outcomes of the research.

Chapter 8 Conclusion discusses my contribution to knowledge and highlights the benefits and limitations of the research. I discuss the wider implications of the research and suggest areas for future research and provide recommendations for organisations and practitioners about how to develop transformative community engagement strategy and practice for sustainable neighbourhood regeneration.

Chapter 9 provides a Critical Summary of the work and thesis presented and incorporates theoretical and methodological perspectives and expands upon the theoretical contribution to knowledge. I reflect back on the process and provide an account of the lessons learnt as a result of undertaking the research.

Chapter 2: A Review of the Literature

Introduction

This chapter situates the research in the wider academic literature and defines the core terms and relevant theories with regard to neighbourhood regeneration and community engagement. When approaching the literature, I was already based in Brightmet and undertaking the Pre-Step stages in each Inquiry Stream. I was mindful of the difficulty faced by the Neighbourhood Management Team (NMT) and other partners in trying to encourage residents to be involved in projects, activities and services in Brightmet. The chapter is divided into six parts to provide an analysis of relevant literature, identify gaps in knowledge that the research will address and these are:

1. Community Engagement;
2. Community Engagement Strategy and Practice;
3. Sustaining the Impact of Regeneration;
4. Neighbourhood Management;
5. Resident Experience of Regeneration;
6. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework.

2.1 Part 1: Community Engagement

The importance of community engagement in regeneration has been emphasised by many authors and policy makers because participation is said to achieve a variety of positive outcomes for people and place (Gustafsson and Driver 2005; Burton 2009; Gregson and Court 2010). It is considered to be unequivocally positive, necessary, and significant in reversing the fortunes of deprived areas (Robinson 2005). The identification of solutions pertinent to local need and the shift of power to residents from government have also been suggested as naturally occurring outcomes of community engagement. However, critics of engagement in regeneration suggest activities “have demonstrably failed in the past” (Cook 2002: 526) and that “effective participation is so rarely achieved in practice” (Burton 2009: 271). In this section I describe community engagement, present various models of participation and review the literature about the motivations and barriers for residents in engaging with service providers. This discussion is structured under the following headings:

1. Describing community engagement;
2. Models of community engagement;
3. Engagement – for the few;
4. Factors affecting engagement.

2.1.1 Describing community engagement

Terms such as involvement, engagement, and participation are used, interchangeably, in academic and practice-based literature when examining the relationship between service providers and local people (Atkinson 2003; Muir 2004; Smith 2008; Ravensbergen and VanderPlaat 2009). Typically, community engagement encompasses the interaction between local people and public service agencies, based on institutional agendas to improve services and increase community involvement in local governance. A simple way of viewing engagement is that it “should enable local people to develop their own solutions to local problems” (Andrews and Turner 2006: 378). According to the Standards for Community Engagement for practitioners, community engagement is:

Developing and sustaining a working relationship between one or more public body and one or more community group, to help them both to understand and act on the needs or issues that the community experiences (Communities Scotland 2005: 4).

Within the literature, community can be used to describe a group of people living in the same area, a group sharing common values, or interests or living similar lifestyles, although there does not appear to be a widely-held established definition (Hoggett 1997). The concept of ‘community’ in regeneration is usually defined by geographic identity, for funding requirements, that seeks to simplify or homogenise different areas (Schaechter and Loftman 1997) and this means that diverse representation is unlikely to be accommodated by engagement activity (Smith 2008). There is a shared view in the literature that policymakers ignore that communities and neighbourhoods are heterogeneous, diverse and, often, the site of conflict (Atkinson and Cope 1997; Jones 2003; Page 1996; Craig 2007). Following these objections raised about the use of ‘community’ as a catch-all term with political meaning that assumes homogeneity in neighbourhoods, I do not use the term ‘the community’ in this thesis. Instead, I use ‘residents’ or ‘local people’ to describe individuals and groups who live in the Brightmet neighbourhood, an area defined by the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy (Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council 2009).

The literature rarely spells out in the literature who is the ‘recipient’ or contributor to engagement activity (O’Hare 2010) and the terms used to describe individuals and groups are not well-defined. The five significant groups I have identified from the literature are stakeholders, customers, citizens, tenants and communities of identity and interest. The term ‘stakeholder’ is used primarily within the context of planning, where practitioners undertake a ‘stakeholder analysis’ (Estrella and Gaventa 1998). Stakeholder refers to those

who are affected by decisions and “have a stake in an initiative or can influence the progress or outcome of work” (Baker, Coaffee and Sherriff 2006). The term mainly concerns business interests and is not generally used in studies exploring social and economic aspects of regeneration.

Customer engagement can be described as the “input of users and clients in informing detailed operational issues relating to the delivery of particular services” (Martin 2003: 194). There is a large body of knowledge about service user involvement in health and social care services (Beresford 2002). Within the literature, discussions focus on whether people have a choice as ‘customers’ about who delivers the services and how they are delivered, especially if receiving public sector provision in social housing or healthcare (Forbes and Sashidharan 1997).

Citizen engagement views residents as part of civil society, participants in political and democratic governance processes, at a local level, acting for the individual and collective common good (Andrews and Turner 2006; Brannan, John and Stoker 2006; Marinetto 2003; DCLG 2008). Activity focused on citizen engagement may include deliberative democracy, citizen juries and participation in decision making (New Economics Foundation 1998) in a bid to improve services, increase political involvement and voter turnout (Richardson 2012). As the Neighbourhood Management Team (NMT) were interested in exploring informal modes of engagement and how residents could contribute to service development and delivery, rather than improving local democratic processes in structured formats, literature about citizen engagement was not considered relevant to engagement in Brightmet.

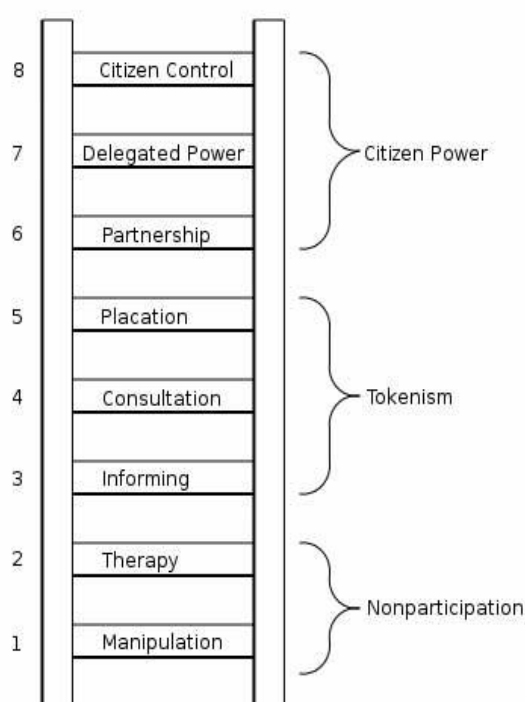
There is debate in the sector about whether people who rent social housing should be called ‘customers’ rather than ‘tenants’, to signify the new relationship with housing providers (Hilditch and Brandon 2012; Brandon 2012). Social landlords have an extensive history of involving tenants in service planning and delivery, and regulation, and as part of Tenants and Residents Associations and Tenant Management Organisations (Simmons and Birchall 2007). Studies have analysed the local and contextual factors that have affected tenant participation (Cairncross, Clapham and Goodlad 1992) and motivations of tenants for being involved (Simmons and Birchall 2007). There are some similarities between tenant participation and community engagement as both may attempt to involve particular groups of people. However, tenant participation only concerns those living in social housing (Cole, Hickman and Reid 1999; Kruythoff 2008). This provides limited scope when investigating regeneration on a neighbourhood-wide basis, incorporating different tenured properties, as in the case of this research.

Community engagement initiatives can be designed to benefit particular neighbourhoods or sections of the population living in a certain place. It may also be important to engage with specific communities of identity or interest (Martin 2003). Specific studies exploring the participation of certain demographics of people include the engagement of young people (Fitzpatrick, Hastings and Kintrea 1998; Amsden and Van Wylsberghe 2005; Toomey 2008) and disabled people (Edwards 2009). These studies suggest that providing a tailored approach to the types of activity and the mode of engagement is crucial when seeking to involve specific groups of people, an aspect of practice which the NMT became increasingly aware (6.6.5).

2.1.2 Models of community engagement

Arnstein's (1969) ladder of involvement (Figure 3) is a frequently referenced typology of participation (Wilcox 1994; New Economics Foundation 1998; Tunstall, 2001; McWilliams 2004; Muir 2004).

Figure 3 Ladder of Involvement (Arnstein 1969)



The ladder describes differing types of participation; from non-participation, through to tokenism and the progression to the 'ideal' level of citizen power. The sole measure of participation, according to Arnstein (1969), is the capacity for citizens to make decisions and having control is the main and ultimate aim for residents. The model has been criticised for being too simplistic, hierarchical and failing to recognise the value of the process and partnership working (Martin 2003) and that participation may be an end in itself (Tritter and McCallum 2006) or goes "beyond the activities listed in the model" (Gustafsson and Driver 2005: 532).

Cornwall's (2008) *Typology of Interests in Participation* is a comprehensive model that shows the rationale of agencies in involving local communities within engagement processes. The model was devised for international development but can be adapted to suit a community engagement in regeneration context, as shown in Figure 4, to explore the different motivations and purposes of community engagement for both service providers and residents. The model shows what the process is seeking to achieve and the motivation and interest for both service provider and resident, however much depends on the context and those within it (Cornwall 2008: 273).

Form	What engagement means to the implementing agency	What engagement means for those on the receiving end	What engagement is for?
Nominal	Legitimation – to show they are doing something	Inclusion – to retain some access to benefits	Display
Instrumental	Efficiency – to limit funders input, draw on community contributions and make projects more cost-effective	Cost – of time spent on project-related labour and other activities	As a means to achieving cost-effectiveness and local services
Representative	Sustainability – to avoid creating dependency	Leverage – to influence the shape the project/service takes and its management takes	To give people voice in determining their own development
Transformative	Empowerment – to enable people to make their own decisions, work out what to do and take action	Empowerment – to be able to decide and act for themselves	Both as a means and an end, a continuing dynamic

Figure 4 Typology of Interests in Engagement (adapted from Cornwall 2008: 273)

I argue that the majority of the literature concerns the Nominal, Instrumental and Representative nature of engagement. The Nominal type of engagement echoes Arnstein's (1969) manipulation stage and Pretty's (1995) categories of 'passive participation', 'participation by consultation' and 'self-mobilisation'. Agencies using nominal approaches for display are more concerned about getting what they need from a top-down structured process, meaning that engagement often lacks value to the resident and that the "involvement of [the] community in regeneration is often more apparent than real" (Jarvis, Berkeley and Broughton 2011: 236).

Instrumental engagement has a focus on efficiency, with a rationale that projects and services will be more cost-effective as a result of community contributions (Cornwall 2008). This relates to Seddon's (2008) critique of top-down decision making in public services where concentrating on efficiency in service delivery, rather than the user experience, actually serves to increase the amount of costs, instead of reducing them. In Breightmet, there were also a limited number of active volunteers who were willing and able to contribute to service providers in the instrumental category.

Representative engagement involves local people shaping a project or service and influencing management and gives them a voice. The aim is to reduce the amount of dependency that residents have on agencies (Cornwall 2008). However, as shown in a large amount of literature, this type of engagement is limited in terms of impact and not flexible enough to suit the needs of local people (Hastings 1996; Schaechter and Loftman, 1997; Mayo and Taylor 2001; Jones 2003; Lowndes and Sullivan 2004). This model of engagement is criticised because the power dynamic is always in favour of the organisations rather than the residents and any dissenting views are ostracised from the process (Diamond 2002). Many studies focus on the inadequate levels of influence that residents have on the engagement process and regeneration outcomes and argue that agencies need to alter their approach to encourage a wider representation from the local area (Lowndes and Skelcher 1998; Foley and Martin 2000; Diamond 2001). Residents may only ever be 'passive recipients' of this type of engagement that has a pre-existing agenda and does not require the agencies to change their organisational culture, method of service delivery or engagement practice. Apart from Blakeley and Evans (2008) who reject a narrow view of participation frequently adopted by public authorities, little consideration is given in the literature about whether this type of engagement is fit for purpose in regeneration contexts.

Gap in Knowledge 1: Transformative community engagement practice

As shown above, research about engagement concerns a narrow view of engagement activity and leaves a significant gap in the literature about Transformative engagement as described by Cornwall (2008). This is where the process and outcome of engagement is of benefit to both agency and resident because it seeks to empower and enable self-determination. Cornwall (2008) acknowledges that this model of engagement is heavily dependent on residents making an active choice to engage, rather than a deliberate self-exclusion.

This research aims to address this gap in the literature about transformative and empowering approaches to community engagement where involving local people in such activity it is “considered both as an end in itself and a process through which regeneration outcomes are delivered” (Imrie and Raco 2003: 6). The research will explore how this type of engagement practice can be developed and identify the implications for practitioners, housing associations and organisations for adopting such an approach in a deprived area. Findings from Inquiry Stream 3 (section 6.6), and the NMT concept of engagement discussed in section 7.2 and 7.3 and the model of transformative engagement produced (8.1.2) address this gap in knowledge and contribute to literature on this topic.

2.1.3 Innovative and informal engagement mechanisms

Most literature investigating engagement mechanisms concentrates on the use of meetings (Baker *et al.* 2006) and consultations (Cook 2002). Less has been written about informal engagement (Duncan 2000) or ‘outreach’ activity (Gray, Roberts, Maccauley and James 2006) where practitioners go and meet residents in public spaces in a neighbourhood setting, rather than expecting people to come to them. Jarvis *et al.* (2011: 242) highlight the importance of a local base from where professionals can get to know the area and create opportunities for engagement activity with local people and this relates to the UCAN centre used by the NMT. Also linked to work of the Housing Arts Officer, the role of participatory community-based art in health, regeneration and research projects has increased in the last 10 years with reported benefits to individuals, groups and neighbourhoods (Angus 2002; Carey and Sutton 2004; Jermyn 2001; Prins 2010). According to Kay (2000), resident involvement in art projects can assist with community development practice by increasing an individual’s personal development by helping their confidence, skills and motivation and social development as participants make new friends. Arts-based engagement can also make people feel more positive about where they live and feel better and healthier as a result of their involvement (Newman, Curtis and Stephens 2003).

2.1.4 Community development and community engagement in regeneration

Community development practice is viewed differently to engagement because of the former’s social justice intent and emphasis on the interrelationships between people, rather than service provision and partnerships found in regeneration (Bowles 2008; Homes and Communities Agency 2009; Shaw 2011; Ledwith 2011). In recent regeneration programmes, policymakers have favoured the use of community engagement and community capacity building to conceptualise the involvement of local residents (CLG/LGA 2007; Scottish Government 2007).

Community capacity building concerns the provision of support to community groups by enhancing the skill development of members to enable them to perform more effectively in formal partnerships or provide feedback to services (Craig 2007). Community Capacity Building has been much criticised in literature as working to suit the agendas of government and partnerships, rather than local people who are labelled as dependent and blamed for the structural and systemic weaknesses that has caused economic decline and social exclusion in their neighbourhood (Diamond 2004; Craig 2007). One of the few research studies exploring community development in regeneration asserts that community development practice was largely unacknowledged in the New Deal for Communities programme in East London (Dinham 2005). In addition, there is little reference to community development practice within neighbourhood management or housing literature. Gilchrist (2006) suggests that community development is required for effective community engagement in deprived areas and how the two can complement each other in a regeneration context is discussed in the research based on the NMT model of practice (6.6).

2.1.5 Engagement – for the few

Studies about community engagement are critical of the way that practice is enacted in disadvantaged areas and the negative impact that it can have on residents (Popay *et al.* 2007). Authors have raised concerns about a lack of response or interest from local people in participating in regeneration initiatives and that leads to poor outcomes and unsustainable regeneration (DTLR 2002). Authors suggest it is unrealistic to expect more than a few residents to engage and “the miracle is how much participation occurs rather than how little” (Blakeley and Evans 2008: 100). However, the view from policy-makers is that local people in disadvantaged areas will want to be heavily involved with engagement activity (DCLG 2008; The Cabinet Office 2010). This assumption has been criticised for a number of reasons in the literature (Stott 2011; Bunyan 2013). Firstly, it is unlikely that residents will be actively engaged over the long-term because most residents will only participate on a cursory basis for short periods of time. Secondly, many people lack the appetite for active involvement in local services and decision making (IPSOS Mori 2010). Thirdly, studies reveal a small minority of local people become involved with engagement activity leading to voluntary work and regularly participate in regeneration partnerships or activities (Marris and Rein 1967/2006; Martin 2003). These residents who are engaged are disproportionately involved in a large number of partnership and governance activities (Skidmore, Bound and Lownsbrough 2006). Research has explored the extent to which this minority can be representative of others living in the area and

perceived as a legitimate ‘community voice’ (Mayo and Taylor 2001; Muir, 2004; Shirlow and Murtagh 2004; Diamond and Liddle 2005; Taylor 2007). Finally, the literature proposes that there is a tendency for service providers to ‘over-use’ key people in engagement activities and the few who do become involved are most likely to face burnout (Skidmore *et al.* 2006).

The engaged minority are sometimes called ‘the usual suspects’ in literature and practice (May 2007; Taylor 2007). In some instances, this term can be used by regeneration and housing practitioners to diminish the legitimacy of residents and suggest that their engagement is merely a personal axe to grind (Field notes 2011 NNW event). This belies a contradiction of community engagement in regeneration; on one hand engagement is considered desirable and something that should be undertaken by all. Those who do participate, however, are dismissed for their level of commitment, involvement in numerous engagement processes and for being the only local people who do engage (May 2007). All of these points relate to the Brightmet context where only a few community groups were established as discussed in section 4.1.

2.1.6 Factors affecting engagement

The literature acknowledges that getting people involved is hard, “those who use services don’t necessarily participate” (Gustafsson and Driver 2005: 533) and the literature has identified numerous barriers to engagement and explanations as to why people do not engage, either for personal reasons or the neighbourhood context. These explanations include that if people are happy they are less likely to participate (Simmons and Birchall 2005), and engagement being partly dependent on the area’s history of community activism and the profile of residents (Power 2004; Burton, Goodlad and Croft 2006). Evans, Russell, Hutchins and Johnstone (2004) suggests that a lack of history of community participation is a hindrance to effective engagement and the existence of established community groups and residents with a desire to change services is a critical success factor in successful neighbourhood regeneration. This is echoed by Jarvis *et al.* (2011) who contends that the lack of community infrastructure in a neighbourhood in Coventry, UK, has had a detrimental effect on both engagement and regeneration.

A key factor underpinning Canley’s decline has been longstanding lack of community engagement. Compared to other areas in the city, there is a dearth of community led organisations (Jarvis et al. 2011: 239).

Studies suggest residents are fearful of not being able to talk to people in authority, a ‘them and us’ mentality from both residents and agencies, personal and social alienation and a low sense of political efficacy (Chanan 2003; Simmons and Birchall 2005 ; Blakeley and Evans, 2008). Other factors that determine if someone will engage have also been identified as “the resources and attitudes of participants and if they are asked, the issue or service, what incentives are provided and if agencies create facilitating conditions” (Simmons and Birchall 2005: 265). Personal reasons cited in the literature for non-participation were lack of time, family commitments, resources and a lack of self-confidence, self-esteem and wellbeing (Blakeley and Evans 2008; Simmons and Birchall 2005; Our Life 2012). Additional personal and institutional obstacles to engagement are said to have been created by “people’s day to day struggle for survival” (Beresford and Hoban 2005: 19) and the complex economic, social and personal problems they have.

Engaging residents can be difficult. Local residents often feel let down by previous area initiatives...there are communities which have been subjected to generational unemployment, low aspirations and motivation, poor health and low income (SQW 2006).

Trust in public services and agencies emerged as a prominent theme in engagement literature (Purdue 2001; Aitken, 2012). Byrne (2001) proposes that people have become increasingly suspicious, distrustful and apathetic towards claims by decision makers that they can improve the quality of life. Authors have questioned whether service providers really want people to engage and if they are committed to acting on the feedback received (Cook 2002; Simmons and Birchall 2005). If residents become engaged and feel let down or that their contribution is not able to influence, or they are not listened to, they are more likely to withdraw and lack motivation in the future to become involved (Adamson 2010; Henderson *et al.* 2007; Jarvis *et al.* 2011). Previous attempts at involving residents and past regeneration has also been suggested for poor levels of engagement, where residents have been on the receiving end of regeneration schemes but have not always benefitted (Taylor 2000; Burton *et al.* 2006; SQW Consulting, 2008). Jones (2003) argues that local communities point to the evidence of neglect and decline in their areas as proof of a legacy of broken promises and past failures.

East Manchester was a community that had never really been engaged before, consulted before, even informed...there was a high degree of scepticism, massive degree of anger, frustration and there was little trust (Cited in Lawless 2011: 58).

Blakeley and Evans (2009) and Mathers *et al.* (2008) use Rational Choice Theory to explain why people do not participate in regeneration initiatives. They suggest that a lack of engagement is not because of obstacles and barriers, but rather that residents make a rational choice not to engage. As previously discussed, this may be as a result of approaches to engagement that lack transformative intent, do not adequately suit the needs of residents and uses top-down structured mechanisms that do not enable the development of effective relationships. Rational Choice Theory and other factors discussed above are considered when investigating the lived experience of residents in Inquiry Stream 1, the implications for NMT practice in Inquiry Stream 3 and Bolton at Home's engagement strategy in Inquiry Stream 2.

2.2 Part 2: Community Engagement Strategy and Practice

This section reviews the literature concerning the key issues that need to be considered by agencies seeking to engage residents in neighbourhood regeneration. This section discusses a review of the literature concerning engagement and organisational development and focuses on the following topics:

1. Organisational development and community engagement practice;
2. Community engagement skills and practice;
3. Community engagement strategy;
4. Organisational links between strategic and operational.

2.2.1 Organisational development and community engagement practice

Few papers about community engagement in regeneration encapsulate the organisational perspective and identify factors that influence community engagement strategy and develop practice. One example is Adamson (2010) who discusses how cultural shifts are required in organisations to develop community engagement and services. Given that the corporate attitude of service providers is one of the key external factors found to influence the impact of engagement (Findlay 2010) the need to change the culture within organisations and partners is significant to engagement (McCarthy 2007; Miller 2008) and neighbourhood management (Taylor 2000). However, apart from Reid and Hickman's (2002) work on housing providers as learning organisations linking together organisational development and participation, there is little in the literature that concerns organisational change in housing associations delivering neighbourhood regeneration. Instead discussions focus on changes in managerial style following a stock transfer (Pawson and Fancy 2003).

The importance of learning lessons from community engagement activity has been emphasised in the literature (Burns and Taylor 2000; Jones 2003; Burns 2004; Smith 2008). I was mindful of Martin's (2003) warning that practitioners could 'reinvent the wheel' by failing to "tap into this reservoir of knowledge or to reflect upon their own experiences of public participation" (Martin 2003: 1999). I intended to create a process with the Neighbourhood Management Team to capture learning, enable reflection and action for practice development (Chapter 6). From an organisational perspective, it was also important that the research considered how the culture, structures and processes of Bolton at Home adapted to learning that resulted from engagement and discussions about the organisation's role in neighbourhood regeneration (Chapter 5).

2.2.2 Community engagement skills and practice

There have been numerous studies that have addressed the criticism from MacDonald (2003) that more clarity is needed about the skills required for those working in, or managing, regeneration. The Egan Report (Egan/ODPM 2004) identified the skills and knowledge needs of professionals delivering regeneration and sustainable communities and the 'hard' and 'soft' skills required within core professions, associated professions and the wider public. Kagan (2007) makes the case for enhancing the interpersonal skills of regeneration practitioners, and draws attention to active listening and critical self-awareness, when working in partnership with residents. *The Neighbourhood Renewal Learning Framework* situates community engagement within the interpersonal skills but few details are provided about the skills required by practitioners to engage successfully at a neighbourhood level with local people (Neighbourhood Renewal Unit 2002). *The Learning in Regeneration Framework* goes further to discuss the process skills needed to enable change, specific skills related to particular sectors or roles, practical skills to deliver change, and strategic skills to initiate and promote change required by practitioners undertaking community regeneration (Scottish Centre for Regeneration 2010). Literature on the subject of community engagement skills includes the generic learning empowerment framework provided by Chanan and Miller for the Homes and Communities Agency (2009), and the *National Standards of Community Engagement* (Communities Scotland, 2005) provides important clarification about the values of engagement practice. The *Better Community Engagement Framework* emphasises the skills, knowledge and behaviours needed for community engagement. The framework identifies the key purpose and elements of community engagement practice, divided into foundation and developmental elements but is mainly related to supporting community representatives and developing partnerships (Scottish Community Development Centre 2007a).

Few studies acknowledge the broader role of housing associations in regeneration as ‘community investors’ (Slatter 2001) and the requirements for practitioners working in the social housing sector and engaging residents. *Mind the Skills Gap* (ASC 2007) discusses the skills needs of ‘housing and welfare professionals’ separately to ‘community and neighbourhood development professionals’ and frames housing as being only about the physical fabric of neighbourhoods, rather than improving the lives of residents. Similarly guidance for housing associations in response to the government’s localism agenda, from the Homes and Communities Agency (2010a,2010b), identifies community engagement as involvement in planning and re-development, issues solely concerned with physical regeneration. Miller (2008) highlights the necessary skills and attributes needed to manage and undertake effective community development work but neglects to say how connections to community engagement and regeneration can be made. Whilst Coatham (2007) outlines the changing skills and competencies required by housing professionals working in regeneration contexts and how higher education can respond, there is no explanation about how these skills can be further developed when practitioners are in post. Kasim (2007) concludes that a lack of government instruction about community engagement and local opposition to the Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder programmes, led to her to explore skills development for all stakeholders, within this initiative engaging through meetings, consultations and partnership structures.

Gap in knowledge 2: Identifying and developing skills for engagement practice in neighbourhood management for housing association staff

Having reviewed the literature above, there is insufficient detail to enable housing associations to identify the relevant skills and experience required for community engagement practitioners in deprived areas. This becomes more apparent when considering community engagement skills and practice necessary for the successful delivery of neighbourhood management. Literature about engagement is scarce about how practitioners can enhance skills and competencies and importantly how practice can be developed, once in post. The majority of skills research about community engagement activity revolves around the development of partnerships and a more instrumental or representative view of engagement. The research explores this gap in knowledge about the skills required by regeneration professionals, employed by a housing association, undertaking community engagement practice in deprived neighbourhoods. This is discussed in relation to Research Objectives 2 and 3 in section 7.2 and 7.3.

2.2.3 Community engagement strategy

Some studies have suggested that organisations need to be clearer about what they expect from engagement, why they are engaging with local people and what outcome is to be achieved as a result of engagement (Simmons and Birchall 2005; Findlay 2010). When reviewing other housing associations' strategies, I found that they refer to community engagement as part of a Resident Involvement strategy linked to Housing Services (St Vincent's Housing 2010; New Charter Housing Trust 2011; Plus Dane Group 2011). Bolton at Home uses a different approach where their community engagement strategy describes an overarching framework with wider regeneration objectives, achieved through the involvement of local people, not just tenants. The 'Duty to Involve' requirement in the Community Empowerment White Paper (CLG 2008) meant that local authorities and Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) needed to create community engagement strategies. These documents outlined the ways that residents could become involved in decision making, not just within a regeneration context but in every aspect of public service provision.

Despite this, few practitioner or academic resources existed to explain how to develop a community engagement strategy apart from Icarus (2005). Andrews and Turner's (2006) paper was helpful in identifying two separate approaches local authorities have adopted to increase participation in local democracy. One is Consumerist which focuses on communication and consultation on the consumption of local services and the other, Participatory that concentrates engagement activity on capacity building. A Consumerist approach is, primarily, aimed at achieving improvement in efficiency, effectiveness and economy and stresses the importance of customer satisfaction with the delivery of a service or product consumption (Forbes and Sashidharan 1997). It is probably easier for organisations to label local people as 'consumers' and create structured mechanisms for discussion about defined and boundaried service areas than adopt participatory approaches to engagement. This is because a Participatory approach to engagement requires a high level of commitment from local authorities as it can "generate social inclusion and further enhance capacity for effective participatory engagement" (Andrews and Turner 2006: 381). In a similar way to Transformative engagement (Cornwall 2008), a participatory approach is said to create a process that allows local people to take ownership in decision making and lead to community-wide benefits. Andrews and Turner (2006) explain that agencies need to address patterns of inequality and disadvantage and use various methods to engage with different groups and the most socially excluded in neighbourhoods. They also warn of local processes becoming dominated by certain powerful individuals, as echoed by Lawson and Kearns (2014) in their study about a regeneration initiative in

Glasgow. Andrews and Turner (2006) do not provide detail about participatory processes or methods to be used by agencies, but argue that it is important to improve existing models of community engagement by developing frameworks showing the role of engagement in local decision-making.

2.2.4 Organisational links between the strategic and operational

To be effective, community engagement needs support from the highest level in organisations and frontline staff need to have access to key decision makers at both strategic and operational levels (Duncan 2000). There were limited findings in the literature that explored the connection between strategic and operational functions in organisations undertaking community engagement (Icarus 2009), or the identification and resolution of resolving tension across organisations rather than partnerships as shown in Diamond and Liddle (2005). There were examples of good practice guides about the operational and delivery of engagement practice within research papers, best practice reports and government policy, (Lister, Perry, and Thornley 2007; Manchester and Salford HMR Pathfinder nd). However, there was little agreement about the purpose and strategic direction of community engagement. The majority of literature I reviewed focused solely on frontline staff or the nature of partnership in regeneration (Jones 2003; Smith 2008). Such work does not present multiple perspectives about engagement or seek to determine if community engagement is understood differently by staff in various roles in organisations. The need for risk and innovation from organisations to achieve successful and sustainable neighbourhood regeneration rather than increased staffing and funding has been identified.

The priority was innovation but programme failed from a lack of imagination and adaptability, not a lack of resource (Marris and Rein 1967/2006: 41).

Gap in Knowledge 3: Development of community engagement strategy for housing associations

As discussed above, there is incomplete data about how community engagement strategy can be developed by staff, especially those working for housing associations. The importance of sharing knowledge about success in neighbourhood management has been recognised (Taylor 2000) and, in practical terms, this can be shown with the creation of the National Association for Neighbourhood Management in 2003 to support the Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders. I was interested in how the research could identify different types of engagement within the same organisation and develop strategic

level thinking about engagement and make connections between the two (Chapter 5 and 6). This research addresses this gap in knowledge and contributes to the literature about the development of community engagement strategy through the adaptation of the Consumerist and Participatory Framework. The framework is discussed in Inquiry Stream 2 (section 5) and Discussion and Conclusion chapters (sections 7.4, 8.1.1).

2.3 Part 3: Sustaining the Impact of Regeneration in deprived areas

This section reviews studies that seek to explain why regeneration schemes have failed to have a lasting impact on people and place and tackle deep-rooted issues in deprived neighbourhoods. Despite 30-40 years of area-based regeneration policies and initiatives, researchers conclude that there has been little, if any, discernible impact on the quality of life of residents, levels of multiple deprivation and unemployment in the most disadvantaged areas in England (Tunstall and Coulter 2006; Tyler and Rhodes 2007; Tunstall and Fenton 2009). Various studies have been very critical of regeneration programmes particularly in 1980s and 1990s because of a failure to engage with local people and limited effectiveness of both regeneration policy and intervention (Foley and Martin 2000; DTLR 2002; Imrie and Raco 2003; Green, Grimsley and Stafford 2005; Henderson *et al.* 2007). There is also a suggestion that this lack of impact can be attributed to regeneration policies that are form over substance (Edwards 1997) and neglect structural issues at a national and global level that most affect local neighbourhoods (Colenutt and Cutten 1994; Trott 2002; Henderson *et al.* 2007; Ravensbergen and VanderPlaat 2009). Furthermore,

There is rarely a clearly stated theory of change that explained how the policy was expected to work by connecting the policy objectives to the programme outcomes (Griggs, Whitworth, Walker, McLennan and Noble 2008: 2).

Authors assert that sustainability has become another ‘buzzword’ within regeneration, limited to market based constraints and “mere garnish sprinkled over other pre-existing policy commitments” (Evans 2003 cited in Lombardi *et al.* 2010). The literature considers sustainability in regeneration contexts within a framework of creating new communities (new build properties) in or near existing and more established developments to increase the property values of the area and change the socio-economic mix of residents (Green *et al.* 2005; Falk and Carley 2012; Livingston, Kearns and Bailey 2013). Related to this, writers have questioned the extent to which this ‘gentrification’ strategy of encouraging new residents (mainly) professionals to move into the area in order to galvanise the local

economy, has occurred to the detriment of the poorer indigenous populations (Henderson *et al.* 2007; Allen 2008). For the purposes of this thesis, my use of the term, sustainability, will not be based on the integration of new and old communities and tenure diversification (see Armstrong 2010) or sustainability within housing that mainly concerns energy efficiency issues (Robison and Jansson-Boyd 2013). Instead, I have constructed a conception of sustainable regeneration that acknowledges the following themes that emerged from the literature:

1. Integrated and holistic approaches;
2. Health, wellbeing and the development of social capital;
3. Interventions tailored to the neighbourhood context;
4. determining the quality and impact of community engagement;
5. Long term commitment.

2.3.1 Integrated and holistic approaches

The principal reason proposed by academics for the failure of previous regeneration initiatives is the lack of a holistic approach to tackling the issues in an area and the attention paid to the challenges that local people face (Ginsburg 1999; Griggs *et al.* 2008). Researchers found that “social policy issues are relegated to the margins of policy formation and implementation” (Schaechter and Loftman 1997: 2) which means that social aspects of regeneration are sidelined in favour of emphasis on economic and physical developments. This lack of focus on social and community concerns also serves to malign the importance of the deep connections between social, economic and physical aspects in neighbourhoods and to potentially ignore what matters most to residents (Ginsburg 1999). The need to join together ‘place’ based interventions, focused on the neighbourhood, and ‘people’ oriented approaches has been identified by authors (Hall 1997; Griggs *et al.* 2008). Studies have concluded that sustainable regeneration is a complex and multi-dimensional process (Marris and Rein 1967/2006; Tunstall and Fenton 2009) that should start with a focus on economic development and job creation together with social inclusion interventions to offer an integrated and sustainable approach (Joseph Rowntree Foundation 1998; Taylor 2008; IPPR North, The Northern Way and Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2010). This was emphasised in an evaluation of the UK Single Regeneration Budget that concluded that future regeneration programmes needed to concentrate on the interactions between significant themes, including housing, health, crime and education (DTLR 2002). There is significant support for this approach in the literature regarding the importance of good quality neighbourhood working and the other important aspects in people’s lives (Joseph Rowntree Foundation 1998; Taylor *et al.* 2007). The Egan Review (2004) stressed the need for practitioners to consider the various interrelated themes that make a

community sustainable, in order to achieve a balance within regeneration schemes, as shown in Figure 5. This model of sustainability in neighbourhoods still holds currency today and highlights the multi-faceted issues that policy interventions may need to address. Researchers support the argument made by Egan that quality and effective joined-up services play a huge part in the delivery of sustainable regeneration (Carley and Low 2000).

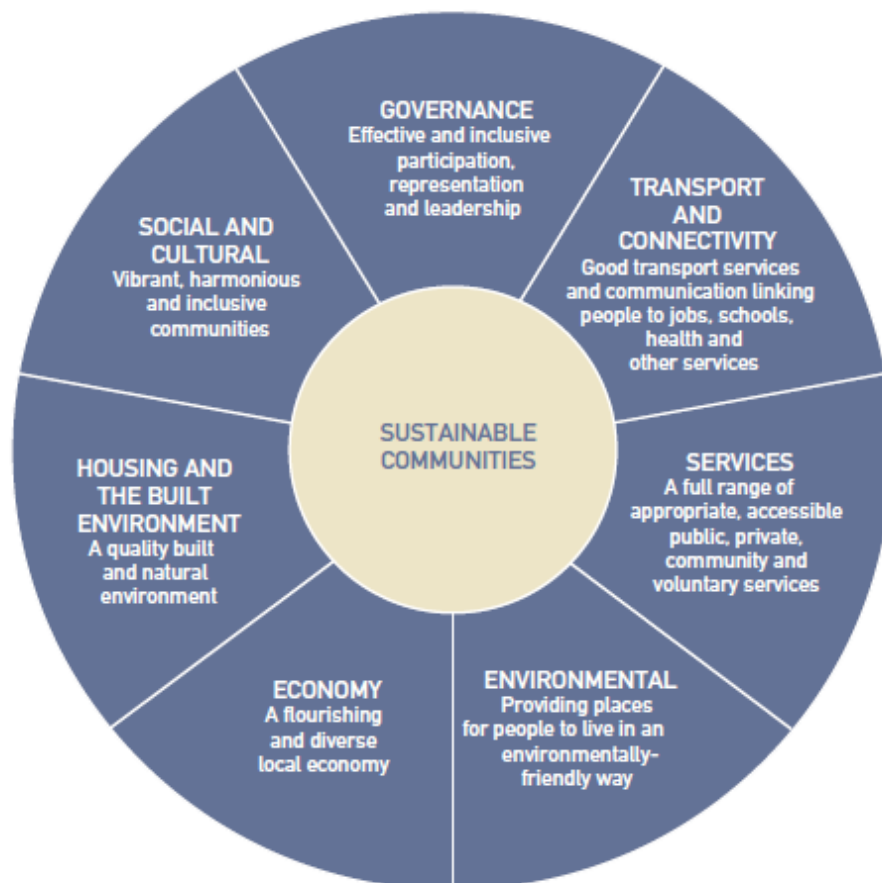


Figure 5 Components of Sustainable Communities (Egan and Office of the Deputy Prime Minister 2004: 19)

Nonetheless, limitations exist regarding Egan's concept of sustainable communities. Firstly, attention should be paid to demographic mix, the impact of socio-economic change in neighbourhoods and longer-term societal trends (for example an increase in the number of older people) in all neighbourhoods, especially those in distressed urban areas (Marcus 1994; Colantonio *et al.* 2009; Conway and Konvitz 2000). Secondly, additional categories that are integral to ideas of sustainability need to be included. Health, safety and social cohesion, social capital and participation are not included in the Egan wheel but in literature about dimensions of social sustainability (Colantonio *et al.* 2009; Evans and Meegan 2006).

Finally, some deprived areas, like Brightmet and Canley in Coventry, need support with nearly all components of the model and “Egan’s vision is a distant ambition” (Jarvis *et al.* 2011: 237). The scale of poverty and lack of infrastructure in the neighbourhood means that for some deprived neighbourhoods,

Progressing neighbourhood regeneration towards the idyll of sustainable communities is possible but only if and when communities are engaged (Jarvis *et al.* 2011: 237).

2.3.2 Health, wellbeing and poverty

The link between housing conditions and people’s health, and poor people living in deprived areas having worse life expectancy than people who live in affluent areas, has been long established (Our Life 2012). Apart from some noticeable exceptions (Bond, Kearns, Mason, Tannahill, Egan and Whitely 2012) community engagement and health is considered separate to regeneration in the literature (Scottish Community Development Centre 2007a). Studies have shown the link between poor health and wellbeing and poverty and how people living on low incomes, facing constant financial crisis, are feeling a sense of despair and hopelessness, leading to low self-esteem and self-value (CRESR Research Team 2011). Authors have also been critical that regeneration schemes have failed to tackle the cause of poverty, deprivation and inequality in disadvantaged neighbourhoods (Gaffikin and Morrissey 1994) and that anti-poverty strategies are mainly concerned with getting people into jobs despite growing numbers of people experiencing ‘in work poverty’ (Parekh, MacInnes and Kenway 2010).

Literature about the sustainability and impact of regeneration present traditional indicators about improving the quality of environment, satisfaction with the area, reduction of ‘social exclusion’ and increased numbers of jobs created (Mathers *et al.* 2008). Other studies focus on value for money as a way to determine impact (Lyons, Smuts and Stephens 2001; Langstraat 2006). But to focus, purely, on outcome in financial terms is to lose sight of important sustainability measures regarding poverty, social connections, happiness, health and wellbeing that need to be addressed (Colantonio *et al.* 2009; Ledwith and Springett 2010; Aked and Thompson 2011; Our Life 2012). Manzi, Lucas, Lloyd-Jones and Allen (2010) suggest that there is inadequate recognition of the contribution that families and tacit knowledge that local people have of their own needs to regeneration initiatives that needs to be addressed.

The importance of wellbeing and social connections as the basis of successful engagement for those with complex needs has also been identified by McIntyre-Mills (2009). The impact of regeneration on quality of life and social issues is, infrequently, included in regeneration schemes or policy evaluations but should be included to ensure that initiatives have a lasting impact on people and place.

Social sustainability blends traditional social policy areas and principles, such as equity and health, with emerging issues concerning participation, needs, social capital, the economy, the environment and more recently, with the notions of happiness, wellbeing and quality of life (Colantonio et al. 2009: 4).

2.3.3 Interventions tailored to the neighbourhood context

Literature has stressed the importance of the local context when implementing regeneration initiatives and how “government policies are never implemented onto a blank slate” (Henderson *et al.* 2007: 1445). The contextual factors of a neighbourhood all play a part as to whether the initiative will be successful and how future policy will be implemented (Henderson *et al.* 2007). Social, economic, geographic, political and historical factors should not be treated as “something fixed and external to the social processes of the intervention” (Burton *et al.* 2006: 306) but as integral to the regeneration initiative and community engagement activity. As previously highlighted in section 2.1.7, previous attempts at engagement and past regeneration programmes can impact current engagement activity and the implementation of neighbourhood initiatives. Other significant contextual factors that influence the success of community engagement in regeneration include the socio-demographic profile of the residents, the state of the community and voluntary sectors, the attractiveness of the techniques of involvement and resources and timing (Burton *et al.* 2006). When evaluating critical success factors to neighbourhood regeneration, IPPR North (2010) claim that the co-location of services, a local presence and flexibility to adapt to the local context is vital. This is echoed by Taylor *et al.* (2007) who says that there is not a universal model or regeneration as one size does not fit all and good examples of practice “cannot simply be transplanted from one area to another without adjustment” (Blake 2008: 10).

2.3.4 Determining the quality and impact of engagement

Academics suggest that there is little explanation about the purpose of engagement (Marris and Rein 1967/2006; Conway and Konvitz 2000; Jones 2003; Burton *et al.* 2006). This, says Chanan, puts practitioners in a confusing position where involving local people is required by

Virtually every policy concerned with local government and public services but at the same time lacks any concrete targets that might give it a clear focus and direction (Cited in Burton *et al.* 2006: 295).

Studies have suggested that methods of evaluating the effectiveness of community engagement are not always appropriate (Duncan 2000; Burton *et al.* 2006; Burton 2009) and regeneration evaluations rarely consider the longitudinal impact (Coatham and Jones 2006). Findlay (2010) argues that there needs to be more robust evidence showing the impact of engagement, with the inclusion of the views of those who are not involved in the regeneration process. The difficulties of measuring the intangible, softer outcomes of engagement are well documented (Burton *et al.* 2006, Burton 2009) as the criteria which defines success/failure in regeneration is often too elusive (Marris and Rein 1967/2006). However despite the challenges to determine the quality and impact of practice, it is vital for staff to establish “how and how well their current methods of citizen engagement work” (Seddon 2008: 175). This was recognised as a challenge for the NMT, especially with their model of practice explored in sections 6.6 and 6.7.

2.3.5 Long-term commitment

Evidence has shown that a long-term perspective is essential if integrated approaches are to be sustainable (Taylor 2000). Enough time must be allowed to develop capacity and commitment, in both community and agencies, for trust to be developed (Taylor *et al.* 2007) and to embed positive changes (AMION Consulting, 2010). Decades of experience and research evidence point to the dangers of ‘stop-start’ initiatives and the importance of long term approaches (Taylor 1995; Fordham 1995; Griggs *et al.* 2008). Studies have found that funding must be continuous to maintain momentum and positive results (Niner 1999; Colantonio *et al.* 2009; IPPR North *et al.* 2010). As the case study of a deprived area of Liverpool indicated, the neighbourhood improved due to substantial regeneration investment in 2000s, however, this “can be hard to sustain when the funding stops and community groups are left to fend for themselves” (Cox *et al.* 2013: 81).

Taylor *et al.* (2007) argue that the neighbourhood is, and will continue to be, an important site for policy intervention and community action to enable local people to come together especially in less affluent areas. However the need to ensure that neighbourhood regeneration policy does not become developed or implemented in a vacuum and has been articulated by a number of studies (Niner 1999; Hall 1997; Meegan and Mitchell 2001; AMION Consulting 2010). Literature emphasises that neighbourhood regeneration must link to wider policy objectives and structural issues in order for community-led interventions to be successful (Marris and Rein 1967/2006). It has been noted that neighbourhood plans must connect with borough-wide and regional strategies to avoid working solely within the boundaries of a certain geographical or administrative area (Hall 1997; Taylor *et al.* 2007). This ensures that regeneration interventions relate to a broader spatial scale beyond the specific area of the programme or estate, especially with regard to housing and economic development, to increase likelihood of programmes and projects becoming sustainable.

2.4 Part 4: Neighbourhood Management

In this section, I provide an analysis of the literature about the role of housing associations in Neighbourhood Management (NM), particularly the level of community investment taken by post 1997 stock transfer housing associations like Bolton at Home. The aim of the NM is to tackle quality of life issues in deprived neighbourhoods by working to narrow the gap between the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods and more affluent areas. A neighbourhood manager and their team, based locally in the neighbourhood, consisting of around 10,000 properties is responsible for liaising with partners, identifying the needs of the area and reports to a partnership board (SQW Consulting for CLG 2008). In terms of delivery framework, Power (2004) suggests, NM has a number of distinct characteristics to other approaches to neighbourhood regeneration as the role of the team is to coordinate specific services coming into the neighbourhood to maximise waste and overlap. These services can include: housing, health, crime and community safety, education; jobs and training and environmental quality; however, the extent to which this occurs depends on commitment of partners (SQW 2006).

2.4.1 Neighbourhood Management and sustainable regeneration

The Neighbourhood Management (NM) framework for regeneration delivery has a number of characteristics required to ensure sustainable initiatives identified earlier in the literature. These include the holistic approach to all aspects of people's lives and their neighbourhoods, an emphasis on local services and partnerships, a focus on gaining

knowledge of area and ensuring targeted and specific interventions to respond to the needs of area, and a local office where the team and manager are based (SQW 2006: 18). The most important aspect of NM is the development of local initiatives, special projects and new ideas and linking all work to residents (Power 2004). NM requires staff to work on both strategic and operational levels (SQW 2006) and this means that the neighbourhood manager and their staff need to develop innovative practice and “challenge traditional ways of working, bring together ideas, resources and people to instigate change and take risks” (Duncan and Thomas 2001: 74). However Evans, Russell, Hutchins and Johnstone (2004) note was a concern about so-called short term ‘funny money’ as there was a lack of national long-term funding attached to NM, an important aspect of sustainability discussed earlier in section 2.3.5.

This NM model is very different in character to a Housing Neighbourhood Management used by housing associations as a way of tackling anti-social behaviour and supporting tenancies and providing a service to tenants. The difference to Neighbourhood Management (that Bolton at Home also deliver) is that the focus of Housing Neighbourhood Management is purely on delivering a housing service to tenants and not about responding to the wider issues of the community or delivery of regeneration. There is an opportunity for housing management services to work in a complementary fashion with NM or regeneration teams to deliver interventions on a partnership basis with other agencies.

Compared to literature about the New Deal for Communities (NDC) programme¹, another facet of New Labour neighbourhood renewal policy, there have been relatively few studies about the impact of Neighbourhood Management. Within the literature about NM, when it was rolled out nationally, good practice guides were produced (Taylor 2000; Duncan and Thomas 2001; Power 2004; SQW, 2006; Johnstone 2008). More recent studies have attempted to assess the impact of the model on deprived neighbourhoods (SQW Consulting 2008; AMION Consulting 2010). Evidence shows that there have been quality of life improvements as a result of enhanced local services, increased investments in neighbourhood infrastructure and it is no longer accepted that “people on low incomes should suffer conditions and services that are failing” (ECOTEC Research and Consulting 2010: 6).

¹ Studies include: Foley and Martin 2000; Robinson *et al.* 2005; Dinham 2005; Lawless 2007; Blakeley and Evans 2008; Mathers *et al.* 2008; Duffy 2009; MacLeavy 2009; Pearson 2009; Lawless 2010; Lawless 2011; Lambie-Mumford 2012.

A number of themes emerge from the studies about Neighbourhood Management (NM) including the importance of partnership working, mainstreaming services and the need for staff to have autonomy and “clear delegated authority to develop and implement plans” (Taylor 2000: 15). Other studies have discussed how many neighbourhood management teams in England focused on ‘crime and grime issues’ such as community safety and environmental concerns in neighbourhoods (Power 2004: 3). For Johnstone (2008), NM can achieve outcomes such as raising aspirations, reducing crime, improving services and reducing the numbers of people claiming benefit. NM is also said to be effective in bringing about change in organisations, institutions and people and that it can provide strategic leadership and influence and be a catalyst for organisational and social change (Johnstone 2008).

More recently, some local authorities have produced reports to explore Neighbourhood Management in practice and to enable them to review the model in light of cuts to local government funding (Norwich City Council 2009; Birmingham City Council 2011). Research with reference to a NM model of regeneration appears to be rare because within England many local authorities have reduced or stopped funding of NM completely. Jarvis *et al.* (2011) and Ward (2011) have considered the effect of engagement in the NM model in a deprived areas of Coventry and Devon, respectively. Pill (2011) is one of the few to consider how to evaluate the NM model and a report about widening economic opportunities in the North of England recommended that Local Authorities should:

Make long term commitment to Neighbourhood Management in priority neighbourhoods with frontline staff properly tasked and resourced to achieve key outcomes, including increased employment, creating communities of choice and sustaining positive community outlook (IPPR North *et al.* 2010: 10).

Gap in Knowledge 4: Housing association role in the neighbourhood management model of regeneration

Housing associations took an active role in NM for regeneration when it was first introduced and funded by national government, around 140 were involvement but this involvement was uneven (Evans *et al.* 2004). The role of HAs in NM also sat outside the remit of the national evaluation of NM and this is reflected by the somewhat vague discussion in the literature about how housing associations were enlarging their scope in deprived areas. Authors note how some housing associations saw neighbourhood regeneration as echoing their sense of social responsibility and what they are already committed to doing in terms of going beyond just providing housing services (Evans and Meegan 2006). Young and Lemos (1997), Smith (2006) and Hills (2007) examined a

broader role taken by social housing providers to deliver social and economic regeneration but not specifically within neighbourhood management.

Literature shows that housing associations were involved in various capacities in NM, usually as one of many service providing partners, rather than as leading organisations responsible for the commissioning and delivery of the neighbourhood management partnership structure (Evans *et al.* 2004; Evans and Meegan 2006). There are few instances of literature that I have found that showcase a housing association leading on the delivery and commissioning of neighbourhood management (for example, Tower Hamlets in Evans *et al.* 2004). Typically, the local authority is the leading partner and housing associations contribute resources and support (Birmingham City Council 2011). But given the withdrawal of Working Neighbourhoods Fund and other central government regeneration money from 2010, and the cuts faced by local government, many local authorities have discontinued neighbourhood management as a model of regeneration in deprived areas (apart from Wales see Pill 2011). This research explores this gap in knowledge about the role of HAs in neighbourhood management in the current context of partner cuts and economic recession through findings in Chapters 5 and 6. These are discussed with reference to Research Objectives 2, 3 and 4 in sections 7.2, 7.3 and 7.4.

Gap in Knowledge 5: Community engagement undertaken by a housing association

The importance of engaging the community was strongly emphasised in the literature and Duncan and Thomas (2001) note for housing associations, transforming the tenant-landlord relationship will be fundamental to the success of Neighbourhood Management (NM). Evans *et al.* (2004) propose a number of critical success factors for NM, including funding available for alternative approaches to services, good chemistry between professionals and residents and the active engagement of residents. However, there is little guidance in the literature about how engagement and good chemistry could be encouraged and how community engagement practice could be developed. The majority of literature about engagement in NM has concerned the involvement of local people in formal consultations or as representatives in partnership boards that steer the work of the neighbourhood manager (Taylor 2000; SQW Consulting 2008; AMION Consulting 2010). Studies have viewed community engagement in neighbourhood management with this narrow, service-based perspective or resident involvement in consultations (Evans *et al.* 2004), rather than arts-based informal engagement as noted in section 2.1.3.

As discussed previously, within housing research about housing associations, literature has tended to explore tenant involvement which considers the level of influence on services and governance that tenants have solely in a housing context (Cairncross, Clapham and Goodlad 1992; Hickman 2006; Simmons and Birchall 2007; Kruythoff 2008). My work considers engaging with residents in all tenures, not just those in social housing and explores the gap in knowledge about housing associations undertaking community engagement, within a neighbourhood management model of regeneration. This is discussed in Inquiry Streams 2 and 3 (sections 5 and 6) and in response to Research Objectives 2, 3 and 4 in sections 7.2, 7.3 and 7.4.

2.5 Part 5: The Resident Experience of Regeneration

Another aspect of my literature review was to find studies that examined the resident experience of regeneration and the characteristics of the neighbourhood setting in which I was based. Deprivation can be defined as “the damaging lack of material benefits considered to be basic necessities in a society” while disadvantaged people or places can mean “unfavourable circumstances, especially with regard to financial or social opportunities” (Oxford Dictionary 2014). Conway and Konvitz (2000) use the term ‘distressed’ when talking about the problems within an urban environment in the USA and other authors use ‘socially excluded’ to frame research about areas with a concentration of poverty (Atkinson 2003). I use both terms of disadvantaged and deprived interchangeably within this thesis to discuss poorer areas such as Brompton. I will summarise studies regarding deprived areas and the narratives used to describe disadvantage and social exclusion and community-based research that was relevant to me when conducting my research in Brompton. These are discussed within the subject areas below:

1. Stigma;
2. The narrative of social exclusion;
3. Empowerment.

2.5.1 Stigma

Studies have found that it is not just material disadvantage that exists in deprived areas, as poor reputations can have a profound impact when areas are viewed as ‘problem places’ to home ‘problem people’ (SQW 2006). Despite improvements made as a result of regeneration, public stigma of a deprived neighbourhood can still continue to exist (Dean and Hastings 2000) and impact on all areas of residents’ lives (Niner 1999). In Hastings’ (2009) study of environmental services, she found that marginalised neighbourhoods

deliberately receive a lower quality of service and that agencies can contribute to continuing the problems in poorer areas by rationing services. Authors suggest that it is not appropriate to talk about a single perception of a neighbourhood as there are ‘fractured images’ based on three types of residents: “the committed stayer; potential leavers and probable leavers” (Dean and Hastings 2000: 7). These different identities have implications for how people view their neighbourhood and other residents and their level of attachment to the local area. This is echoed in work by Dekker (2007) who suggests that issues of neighbourhood identity and attachment, social capital and socio demographic characteristics that play a part in whether someone will engage. It is recommended that practitioners working in disadvantaged places proactively address the ‘image management’ of neighbourhoods (Dean and Hastings 2000; Colantonio *et al.* 2009; Kearns, Kearns and Lawson 2013) but also work to increase levels of attachment felt by local people to increase engagement with service providers. This was what the Neighbourhood Management Team attempted to address with the PhotoBrightmet project, to challenge existing negative perceptions of the neighbourhood and celebrate positive views held by residents (section 3.4.1).

2.5.2 The narrative of social exclusion

Stigma could be said to exist in poorer areas because of the way that disadvantaged people and places have been labelled and pathologised as ‘undeserving’ within regeneration discourse (Imrie and Raco 2003), in the media and wider society (Jones 2012). It has been suggested that these social constructions of ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ are evident in the ways in which urban problems and poverty are defined by government (Edwards and Batley 1978). Authors are critical of how policies directed at poorer people and places could be viewed as a form of social control intended to pacify and dilute resistance to government (Taylor 2007), or “form of treatment for collective depression” (Marris and Rein 1967/2006). Explanations for the growing social problems in disadvantaged areas centre on individual and community pathology connected to the breakdown of family and community ties. This can be seen in the writing of Murray (1990) who talks of a growing ‘underclass’ in UK society whose corrosion lies at the heart of urban problems and disorder (Imrie and Raco 2003; Jones 2012).

Literature supports the view that community is a contested term and “has more rhetorical fluff attached to it than most other words in the social science lexicon” (Edwards 1997: 832). Taylor (1995b) notes that descriptive words like community have changed meaning to relate to normative values and have become “political shorthand for the socially excluded or a metaphor for the absence or withdrawal of services by the state” (Hoggett 1997: 14). Within recent UK regeneration policy and initiatives, communities have been portrayed as the site of social problems, immoral behaviour, disorder and (welfare state) dependency. However, deprived neighbourhoods are simultaneously being promoted as a source of moral good and where “the answer to all social problems appears to be more or better community” (Cochrane and Newman 2009: 43). Those living in deprived areas have been described as ‘socially excluded’ from society by governments and, in policy terms, are increasingly responsible for their own fate and the outcome of regeneration programmes, as “any failure will be their failure” (Atkinson 2003: 118). Recent research found that people think that they are accountable for unemployment as a result of economic restructuring (CRESR Research Team 2011), despite feeling high levels of hopelessness and a lack of control and choice about their lives. Regeneration initiatives have been criticised by authors for reinforcing such narratives of social exclusion and placing the blame for the deep rooted social, economic and physical issues on the people that live in deprived neighbourhoods.

The notion of a dependent and passive neighbourhood is said to be at the core of contemporary regeneration where ‘local’ actors [residents] are included only after the event (Diamond and Liddle 2005: 11).

2.5.3 Empowerment

There are a number of theories of empowerment that provide a different view on how the ‘powerless’ and socially excluded, as discussed above, can become more powerful. Empowerment is said to be “the process by which power is gained, developed, seized, facilitated or given” (Staples 1990 cited in Hart, Jones and Bains 1997). Zimmerman (1995) identified that individual psychological empowerment operates through intrapersonal, interaction and behavioural components. This type of empowerment is different to political action and community empowerment (Rissel 1994) that some authors suggest is required so that disadvantaged people can gain power. Consciousness-raising work needs to be undertaken with residents in deprived neighbourhoods to challenge the structures of power (Freire 1970/1996; Ledwith 1997, 2011). This activity links together the personal struggles that people experience with the wider structural and economic issues at global and national levels and locates power and domination within the social and

political framework of hegemony (Simon 1977; Ledwith 1997). In this model of empowerment, the personal and political is the basis for informed action for social change (Springett and Ledwith 2010) and collective empowerment is “the product of being critical and cannot be understood without insight into the way that power works in society” (Shor 1992 cited in Ledwith 1997: 21).

The literature has divergent views on the role of agencies to enable empowerment to occur for residents of deprived neighbourhoods. Ledwith and Springett 2010 argue that many organisations whether delivering services, or who have regeneration as their focus, find it extremely hard to engage in dialogue because they often want an outcome that favours their view or interests. This means that “the barriers to transformation lie within organisations and those who work in them” (Ledwith and Springett 2010: 206). However, other research illustrates the positive contribution that agencies can make in disadvantaged areas by taking on roles that are enabling, supportive and facilitative and provide a catalyst for action (Toomey 2009).

If adopting a zero sum model of power within community engagement practice, critics of participatory paradigms suggest that seeking to redistribute power from service providers and agencies, ‘the powerful’, to local people who are marginalised and lack power, ‘the powerless’ will be nothing more than fantasy (Ledwith 2011). The reality is that organisations like Bolton at Home will always have more power over residents because they can evict tenants and have control over services and the environment where people live. For some, a genuinely empowering space created by practitioners on behalf of local people is impossible because of the empowerment paradox,

Virtually all empowerment efforts involve a grant of power by a favoured group to others... Unless the favoured group changes the very circumstances that have given it power in the first place, the grant of power is always partial (Gruber and Trickett 1987: 370).

2.6 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The following theoretical and conceptual framework was created to synthesise the key theories and concepts that were most important from the literature to guide the research.

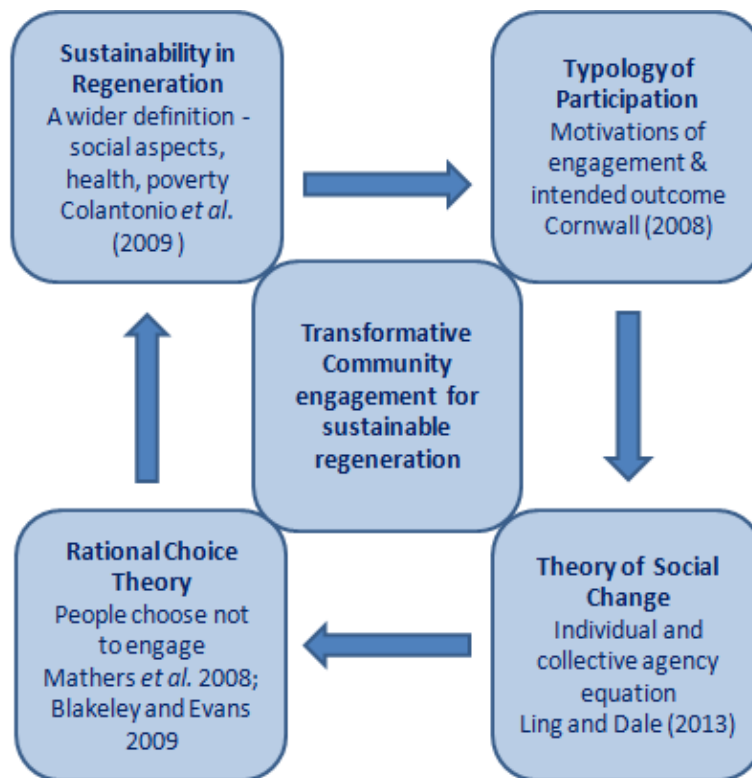


Figure 6 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

2.6.1 Sustainability (Colantonio et al. 2009)

This is the starting point for an exploration into community engagement for sustainable regeneration. The concept of sustainability in regeneration for this research inquiry has been constructed based on the theories of Colantonio et al. (2009) and Egan (2004). Both view the process of neighbourhood regeneration as a holistic and interlinked process that focuses on the multi-faceted nature of people and places. Work to address engagement, health and wellbeing, improving services, quality of life issues and social aspects in deprived areas is emphasised and important for ensuring that not only is regeneration successful and more likely to have a lasting impact.

2.6.2 Typology of participation (Cornwall 2008)

To achieve sustainability in regeneration, the engagement type that offers most potential for both practitioners and residents to work towards similar goals is Transformative Engagement within Cornwall's (2008) typology of participation. This type of engagement practice suggests that empowerment is ability for people to be able to decide and act for themselves. From an agency perspective, the 'invited spaces' and processes that are created by engagement are designed to "build capacity, nurture voice and enable people to empower themselves" (Cornwall 2008: 275). This resonates with the NMT's aims of practice where the main purpose, process and outcome of engaging local people is to increase the sense of personal efficacy and confidence and level of control they have, or think they have, over their lives. I was interested in exploring how a transformative model of engagement could be further developed from Cornwall's typology and what implications exist for implementation for both practitioners and organisations.

2.6.3 Theory of social change (Ling and Dale 2013)

The theory of change that appeared to have most relevance to the work of Bolton at Home and the Brightmet context was the theory of social change espoused by Ling and Dale (2013) about the development of individual and collective agency to achieve social action. Agency is the "ability to affect events outside of one's immediate sphere of influence" (Ling and Dale 2013: 6). To develop and use individual agency, an individual must be sufficiently linked to other people in the neighbourhood and action will occur if personal barriers can be overcome. These could be low levels of self-esteem and confidence or levels of poverty and health issues as discussed earlier. Individuals need to have the "intent, time, skills and self-efficacy to identify solutions, motivate themselves and others to pursue change" (Ling and Dale 2013: 5). Social capital consists of informal and formal networks, institutions and groups, social norms, trust and reciprocity and the concept has been extensively explored by Bourdieu (1980) and Putnam (2000). The theory of individual and collective agency is that an increase in the capacity and agency of individuals can lead to improvements in community capacity and the development of social capital and collective agency, resulting in social change in deprived areas and connects to a broader goal of sustainable regeneration.

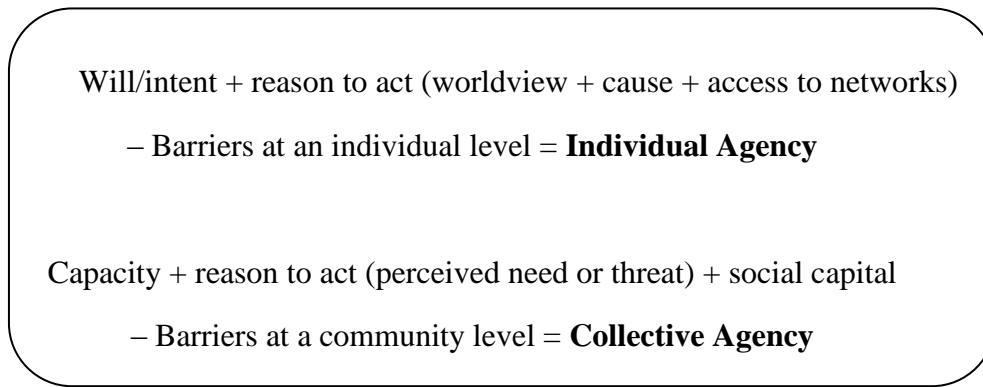


Figure 7 Agency at individual and collective scale (Ling and Dale 2013: 8)

It is vital, on both an individual and collective scale, that residents are aware that they “possess agency and believe they can make a difference through exercising it” (Ling and Dale 2013: 4). Within a deprived neighbourhood, Ling and Dale (2013) argue that both social capital and agency must exist in order to effect meaningful change. This is the focus of the work of Bolton at Home and the Neighbourhood Management Team to help residents develop social capital and individual and collective agency through a process of transformative engagement.

2.6.4 Rational Choice Theory (Blakeley and Evans 2009; Mathers *et al.* 2008)

Blakeley and Evans (2009) and Mathers *et al.* (2008) use Rational Choice Theory to explain why people do not participate. They suggest that a lack of engagement is not because of obstacles creating barriers to engagement, but rather that local people make a rational choice not to become involved with activities provided by service providers. Rational Choice Theory is usually applied within studies about political participation used to explain how people are more likely to participate if action protects their interests with the minimum amount of costs and maximum amount of benefit (Crossley 2002). Identified costs to getting involved for residents include: being unpopular; effort of learning new skills; being bored or uncomfortable; meeting new people; financial costs (Simmons and Birchall 2005: 267). Studies have found that deprived communities may, actively, choose not to engage because there is no positive benefit for them or for the issue to be resolved (Foley and Martin 2000; Beresford and Hoban 2005; Mathers *et al.* 2008). Rational Choice Theory held great appeal when exploring possible factors why residents in Breightmet do not engage with service providers. As suggested by Cornwall (2008), most transformational intentions can meet a dead end when intended beneficiaries’ choose not to take part. The application of this theoretical concept could assist in the development of the NMT’s practice, which is reliant on residents willingly engaging to address their needs, create social change that leads to sustainable regeneration.

2.7 Summary

This chapter has reviewed the literature on community engagement, neighbourhood management, sustainable regeneration and resident experiences of regeneration. It has identified the following gaps in the literature that the research intends to explore,

Gap in Knowledge 1: Transformative community engagement practice;

Gap in knowledge 2: Identifying and developing skills for engagement practice in neighbourhood management for housing association staff;

Gap in Knowledge 3: Development of community engagement strategy for housing associations;

Gap in Knowledge 4: Housing association role in the neighbourhood management model of regeneration;

Gap in Knowledge 5: Community engagement undertaken by a housing association.

The theoretical and conceptual framework created from the key concepts from the literature will guide the inquiry and relates to the discussion of the findings in section 7.

The next chapter discusses the Research Approach used to design the research process, methods and analysis and develop the Inquiry Streams.

Chapter 3: Research Approach

Introduction

This chapter will explain my rationale for using an action research approach. I discuss how context influenced the emergent design of the research, and the type of action research strategies chosen in both organisational and community settings. I provide an account of the data collection methods and approach to analysis and ethical issues and quality considerations. To conclude, I outline the activities of each Inquiry Streams in relation to the action research process. Action research is said to be “an umbrella term for participatory and action oriented approaches” (Dick 2006: 439). This has enabled me to consider different action research approaches such as Systemic Action Research, Insider Action Research, Co-operative Inquiry, and Participatory Action Research. There are many contextual factors at play when developing an action research process and these are considered in this chapter when describing: the use of an emergent design; methods and analysis that best suited the research inquiry; participants; and anticipated ethical issues.

3.1 Research Objectives

The research aim was to provide a critical examination of community engagement through the development of practice and strategy at Bolton at Home using an action research approach. My research objectives are as follows:

- 1. Characterise the lived experience of residents of the Breightmet neighbourhood and the experience of community engagement with Bolton at Home;*
- 2. Conceptualise the model of community engagement used by the Neighbourhood Management Team to engage local residents in Breightmet;*
- 3. Explore the implications for practitioners in implementing the neighbourhood management model;*
- 4. Examine the strategic implications for Bolton at Home and other UK housing associations in seeking to engage the community in regeneration activities and projects;*
- 5. Examine the extent to which the research has helped to develop organisational community engagement strategy and practice and enable the voices of residents to be heard.*

3.2 Action Research

Action research has been recognised as a legitimate approach to scientific research for over 50 years and compared to other research paradigms has “very different philosophical, epistemology and ontological foundations” (Coghlan and Brannick 2010: 43). The philosophical foundation of action research can be traced from a participatory paradigm (Heron and Reason 1997). This emphasises a subjective – objective reality that is co-created by mind and the given cosmos and an extended epistemology based on experiential, propositional and practical knowing (Lincoln and Guba 2000). Findings are co-created with research participants or co-researchers who are initiated into the inquiry process by the researcher and learn through active engagement in the process (Lincoln and Guba 2000). Action research was the most suitable research strategy for this study as the approach aligns with the research objectives and my understanding of being and knowing in the world. It was also most fitting given my values as a researcher and contextual factors present in and affecting the inquiry setting. Reason and Bradbury (2001) define Action Research as

A participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes (Reason and Bradbury 2001: 1).

The characteristics of action research and dimensions of a participatory worldview have been outlined by Reason and Bradbury (2001) and I have presented these with questions for validity and quality below in Table 1. I will discuss each of the five characteristics as in the next section.

Characteristics of Action Research	Dimensions of a participatory worldview	Questions for validity and quality
1. Human flourishing	Meaning & purpose	Questions about significance
2. Emergent developmental form	Participatory evolutionary reality	Questions of emergence & enduring consequence
3. Knowledge in action	Extended epistemology	Questions about plural ways of knowing
4. Practical issues	Practical being & acting	Questions of outcome & practice
5. Participation & democracy	Relational ecological form (social justice)	Questions of relational practice

Table 1 Key aspects of action research adapted from Reason and Bradbury (2001:2-12)

3.2.1 Human flourishing

Action research seeks to address real world problems in a collaborative and emergent process that encourages participation of ‘research subjects’ in all aspects of a critical inquiry to generate knowledge to create organisational and social change or improve a situation, context, and practice for the benefit of people living or working who are most affected by the phenomenon or topic under investigation. Reason and Torbert describe the characteristics of action research as “future oriented, collaborative, implies system development, generates theory grounded in action and is situational” (Reason and Torbert 2001: 2). As I examined action research, I was excited by the prospect of conducting a collaborative research that found connection with theory and practice in a process of learning and reflection that leads to knowledge generation and improvement (Reason and Bradbury 2001; Brydon-Miller, Greenwood and Maguire 2003). The wider purpose of action research in creating improvement and ensure that the research process is influenced by those most affected by the topic under scrutiny. Understanding what kind of practical and beneficial impact research can have for organisations and communities also held great appeal. The following quote from Reason and Marshall (1987) aligns with the three audiences for whom I have undertaken this research:

All good research is for me, for us, for them: it speaks to three audiences...It is for them to the extent it produces some kind of generalizable ideas and outcomes...It is for us to the extent that it responds to concerns for our praxis, is relevant and timely... [for] those who are struggling with problems in their field of action, It is for me to the extent that the process and outcomes respond directly to the individual researcher's being- in- the-world (Cited in Reason and Torbert 2001: 12).

3.2.2 Emergent developmental form

All action research inquiries are different because of the subjectivities of the research, the setting, the participants, and the researcher. Action research is not a prescriptive approach and can develop over time with different methods and analysis which suit the research questions and “evolves over time as communities of inquiry develop” (Reason, 2006: 189). Kurt Lewin’s (1946) work is frequently cited as providing the foundations for action research in its current form. He developed a process of dynamic spiral steps, each of which is composed of planning, action, observation and evaluation as a result of the action. There are many variations on this cycle such as “plan, act, observe, reflect” (Kemmis and McTaggart 2000), and Stringer’s simplistic model of “look think, act” (Stringer 2007: 8). Generally in action research the cyclical process involves participants in planning action, implementing these plans in their own action, observing systematically the process and

evaluating actions in light of evidence as a basis for further planning and actions (McTaggart 1996). However I have been alert to the warning that:

It is a mistake to think that slavishly following the 'action research spiral' constitutes 'doing' Action Research. Action Research is not a 'method' or a 'procedure' but a series of commitments to observe and problematize through practice the principles for conducting social enquiry (McTaggart 1996: 248).

3.2.3 Knowledge in action

A participatory approach to inquiry requires action researchers to be both situated and reflexive and to be explicit about the perspective from which knowledge is created (Heron and Reason 1997). An extended epistemology recognises the importance of different ways of knowing and these include, propositional, practical, experiential and presentational (Heron and Reason 1997). I wanted to use action research to work towards an extended epistemology for several reasons. Firstly, to explore community engagement in regeneration, a subject area that has held substantial interest for me for many years and would contribute to the academic body of propositional knowledge. Secondly, to support the Neighbourhood Management Team (NMT) in making sense of their experiential and presentational knowledge by using narrative, concepts and theories to build more practical ways of knowing about community engagement practice. This would enable better relationships to develop with local people in Brightmet and as a consequence more progress towards reaching the regeneration outcomes for the residents and the neighbourhood. Thirdly to produce knowledge and action directly useful to the community and create a process where residents could feel empowered through reframing and using their knowledge as suggested by Freire (1970/1996) so

They learn to 'see through' the ways which established interests monopolise the production and use of knowledge for their own benefit (Reason 2001: 182).

3.2.4 Practical issues

Action research is a values driven approach to inquiry that “respects people and the knowledge and experience and for their ability to understand and address the issues” (Brydon-Miller *et al.* 2003: 14). The way that people construct these issues that are important to them, their organisations and communities is very significant to how the research process is developed. An action research approach provides a depth of understanding with investigations into a topic within a single case study.

By linking inquiry to actions in a given context, Action Research understands human inquirers to be acting subjects in a holistic situation. Inquiry is not fragmented and separated; it is treated as a coherent social field (Greenwood and Levin 2007: 64).

Within an organisational context, I was mindful not just of trying to find “solutions to the immediate problems” but also capture “important learning from outcomes both intended and unintended” (Coghlan and Brannick 2010: 5). It was my intention that the examination and development of strategy and practice would be a way to create processes for Bolton at Home “appropriately open to continuing inquiry and transformation, have lasting value” (Reason and Torbert 2001: 16). I concur with the argument that action research should have wider benefit:

If Action Research is to be an effective political tool...and have a major impact in society more generally... then it has to move beyond a single group, team or organisation to work across organisations, networks or partnerships on multiple sites, and at multiple levels (Burns 2007: 15).

3.2.5 Participation and democracy

Action research is argued to be necessarily a democratic process (Greenwood and Levin 1998) and is a process of inquiry that is done “by or with outsider [researchers] to an organization or community but never to or on them’ (Herr and Anderson 2005: 5). The nature of participation within research is crucial as,

Participation is a political as well as an epistemological imperative which affirms the basic human right of persons to contribute to decisions which affect them and to knowledge which concerns them and purports to be about them (Reason and Torbert 2001: 8).

The role of the ‘researched’ is therefore one of ‘participant’, co-producing and constructing knowledge in a process facilitated by the researcher. Instead of viewing the researcher and participants as two different and opposing entities within a research process, Fals Borda (2001:30) talks about how the diverse views of researcher and the researched should be jointly taken into account as ‘thinking-feeling persons’. Within action research, the researcher can be a critical friend and confidant, “facilitator, interlocutor, capacity developer and advocate” (Genat 2009: 114).

3.2.6 Systemic inquiry

Marshall (2011) suggests two additional characteristics of action research to those proposed by Reason and Bradbury (2001). These are “operating systemically with contextual sensitivity including attention to timing; and paying attention to issues of power as an important companion to aspirations of participation” (Marshall 2011: 247). In this section, I introduce the concept of systemic inquiry and action research that is conducted at different levels. Aspects of power, context and timing and how they influence action research processes and outcomes are discussed later in relation to my research in sections 3.5, 3.6.2. Although it could be argued that action research is inherently systemic, and relies “heavily on an interconnected and holistic view of the world” (Greenwood and Levin 1998: 59), not all action research contains different levels of practice or inquiry. Systemic Action Research however has an explicit commitment to work across and between different levels of inquiry to create conditions for change across organisations, geographic or system boundaries. Academics refer to first, second and third person research to acknowledge the nature of systemic inquiry (Chandler and Torbert 2003; Torbert 1999; Reason and Bradbury 2001; Reason and Torbert 2001; Marshall 2011). These are outlined below:

- First person research/practice

This is an individual inquiry undertaken by an action researcher or practitioner to reflect on the process of conducting research and/or examine their own practice;

- Second person research/practice

This is a group or team inquiry, when researchers or practitioners engage with others in conversation to reflect and develop plans for action;

- Third person research/practice

This signifies action research inquiries at an organisational level, within a larger community of practice (Wenger, McDermott and Synder 2002) or wider society. Third person research,

Aims to create social change by influencing and transforming popular opinion, organisational strategy, and government policy (Reason and Torbert 2001:71).

In addition, Marshall (2011) and Coghlan (2002) stress the need to recognise inter-level dynamics as the focus for action research and their significance to the action research process itself. Coghlan (2002) proposes two additional levels of inquiry when conducting Systemic Action Research. These are: *Intergroup level* – where inquiries focus on intergroup dynamics such as becoming interdependent in a work flow or information process and *Inter-organisational*, partnership or network level inquiry or what Burns (2007) calls ‘large system action research’ or ‘networked systemic inquiry’. I show in section 3.6.2 how I was influenced by this thinking to create the research and three interlinked Inquiry Streams.

3.3 Types of Action Research in Organisations

It is recognised that “there are many variations of action research as an orientation to inquiry” (Reason and Bradbury 2008: 1) and that each have merits within a given setting context. I have found that within an organisational setting: Insider Action Research; Systemic Action Research; and Co-operative Inquiry were helpful in suggesting ways to conduct an inquiry with employees to develop practice and create change. Also Maurer and Githen’s (2009) types of action research - Conventional, Dialogic and Critical action research were helpful categories to assess the research with Bolton at Home. Conventional action research is where the researcher assumes the role of expert and pursues the interests of the organisation perhaps in a consultative relationship. There is little space to question existing systems and practice and participants’ involvement is peripheral compared to other types of action research (Maurer and Githens 2009). This approach has been criticised by authors who suggest that action research should have a more emancipatory intent that seeks to challenge the status quo, rather than support existing power relations and powerful interests (Kinsler 2010).

Dialogic action research emphasises the critical engagement of individuals, organisations and communities. Unlike conventional action research that tries to find solutions to stated goals, dialogic action research is more concerned with questioning the goals and dominant norms and values (Maurer and Githens 2009). The dialogue involves the development of shared understanding and learning together with “the surfacing of individuals’ assumptions, values and ways of thinking” (Maurer and Githens 2009: 280) This kind of research does not directly seek emancipation and critique but might still lead to critical reflection on existing practices.

Lastly, critical action research is essentially political in nature and aims to empower oppressed people through a process of constructing and using their own knowledge (Kemmis and McTaggart 2000; Marshall and Reason 2007; Maurer and Githens 2009). Critical action research is however difficult to undertake in organisations and with senior managers as they are usually conceived as ‘the powerful’ in this type of action research. Literature has provided accounts where researchers have supported the interests of the management, and then attempted to engage employees in this critical agenda with limited success (Levesque, Rousseau and Ho 2004; Scholl 2004). I now focus on how change efforts can be established when creating action research inquiries in organisations and with practitioners to create change and develop practice.

3.3.1 Establishing change efforts in organisations

During the research, I was interested in exploring how researchers understand power relations and work with staff at all levels, especially senior managers, to develop change efforts in organisations. This becomes more complex when projects may be constructed in a way that does not seek to challenge the status quo and the role of the researcher is perceived to be more consultative than critical. Within action research accounts, when researchers challenged or critically explored working practices, this was said to undermine the organisation and staff, and made their own role as researchers less secure and more risky (Oyum 2007). This also relates to organisations and people who deploy defensive mechanisms or routines (Argyris 1999) and how managers deal with consultants by using favoured devices to ‘fend off the specialist’ (Pettigrew 1974 cited in Handy 1999: 311). My capacity to provide challenge to those in higher level positions and organisational practices of Bolton at Home was another aspect of my reflection throughout Inquiry Stream 2 with senior managers. Maguire’s (2002) discussion about undertaking Co-operative Inquiry resonated with me, particularly about the challenge of staying true to research principles especially when receiving financial support from an organisation.

The concept of the ‘Tempered Radical’ (Meyerson 2001) held great appeal to me and some of the NMT who wanted to see change within Bolton at Home. Tempered Radicals are people that walk the fine line between difference and fit, and “use their differences to inspire positive changes in their organisations” (Meyerson 2001: xii). I talked at length with two of the NMT about their sense of frustration at the pace of change. I reflected upon how the concept of a tempered radical was congruent with undertaking action research in an organisation to effect change, whilst also attempting to be transparent and open with people about your motives and behaviour.

For Pettigrew (2003), being moral and conducting action research within an organisation is simply not possible. His conclusion is that ‘there is little place for reliance on personal value systems’ and ‘building trust paradoxically cannot always be achieved by openness, honesty and transparency’ (Pettigrew 2003: 388). This is one I do not support but presents an interesting dilemma for action researchers working with organisations and staff attempting to establish change efforts.

3.4 Action Research and the Resident Voice

For working with Brightmet residents and within a deprived neighbourhood, action research approaches in community settings such as Participatory Action Research (McTaggart 1998; McIntyre 2008) held great appeal. The aim of achieving social justice for marginalised communities and creation of social change was important to me when exploring community engagement in regeneration. I was also mindful of ensuring the inquiry process fulfilled the basic values of action research. These include:

Respect for people and for the knowledge and experience they bring to the research process, a belief in the ability of democratic processes to achieve positive social change and a commitment to action (Brydon Miller *et al.* 2003: 15).

3.4.1 Resident voices

I was interested to know how other social researchers had approached researching in and with local residents and how much attention was given to residents’ views of community engagement or regeneration. Page (2006) and McCormack (2009) articulate the experiences of resident as well as public service providers when exploring engagement. Braithwaite, Cockwill, O’Neill and Rebane (2007) tell the narrative of community members becoming community based action researchers to explore community regeneration in Wales. Their study is based in Merthyr Tydfil, an area that has been the site of numerous regeneration and research studies in the past which:

Has precipitated, at best, an indifference to research/community development initiatives and at worse an outright hostility toward those seen as interfering outsiders who don’t understand what it is like to live in the area (Braithwaite *et al.* 2007: 66).

Studies like this that are wholly positioned and mainly written from a resident perspective rather than university researchers or practitioners are rare within regeneration research (and perhaps also action research). I was influenced by studies where researchers sought to gain, or already had insight, into the lived experience of participants using Participatory

Action Research (PAR) (McIntyre 2003; Baker Collins 2005; Cahill 2007; Aziz, Shams and Khan 2011). Hanson and Hanson (2010) are professional researchers engaging with mothers on social assistance in Canada, say that they had a similar frame of reference to participants because they are mothers who have experience of living in deprived areas. Rather than ‘parachuting’ into an area to conduct research, Mathers *et al.* (2008) lived nearby, knew people socially, and met a network of mums. They also admit to “a lot of hanging around” the neighbourhood during the eight months of fieldwork to recruit participants for the research.

Research that seeks to understand patterns of behaviour should attempt to gain appropriate contextual knowledge of the socio – cultural environment... This is a challenge given timescales for research and resource limited policy context, explicit inclusion of ‘the excluded’ is key to exploring community engagement in area based initiatives (Mathers et al. 2008: 602).

3.4.2 Lived experience

The concept of ‘lived experience’ is used by Ditley (1985) as a reflexive or self-given awareness. Developing understanding and making sense of a personal experience is a facet of phenomenology and features in many health related studies such as (Reid, Flowers and Larkin 2005; Benzein, Norberg and Saveman 2001; Lindseth and Norberg 2004; Langemo, Melland, Hanson, Olson and Hunter 2000). Van Manen (1990) explains how this method of researching the ‘everyday experience’ in inquiry can enable insight into the unique nature of people’s situation. This approach has close links with narrative inquiry (Clandinin and Connelly 2000), a way of constructing stories about people’s lives and I found the idea of lived experience useful as a basis for developing inquiries with residents in Inquiry Stream 1 to enable resident voices to be heard. It was important for me to ensure the resident perspective was given equal attention and community based participatory processes could be explored that had a sound democratic and ethical foundation. I was attentive to the importance of offering a balanced view of Breightmet, rather than finding and reporting only the negative aspects and potentially further stigmatising the neighbourhood and the people that live there. I have therefore attempted to use language which will avoid stereotypes and promote concepts such as empowerment and engagement in a more critical way. When researching marginality, poverty and social policy and developing action research processes with people living in deprived areas, there is a danger of reinforcing power relations within research. This can be overcome by a conscious attempt to understand our actions and

How we as researchers influence the research process and awareness of how the research process is structured around issues of dominance and power, gender, class, age and race (Mehta 2008: 240).

3.5 Factors Affecting Action Research Design and Outcome

It was extremely important for me to develop an action research process that was highly participative and enabled staff and residents to learn, reflect and act to develop knowledge based on their experience and create practical changes that would positively impact Brightmet residents. Making reference to Participatory Action Research, Cooperative Inquiry, Systemic Action Research and Insider Action Research, this section describes the factors that influence action research design and outcomes and these are:

1. The research setting and contextual factors;
2. The emergent and changing nature of action research;
3. Role of the action researcher;
4. Quality of relationships;
5. Quality of the action research process;
6. Intended audience and outcomes of action research.

3.5.1 The research setting and contextual factors

As discussed in section 3.2.6, systemic inquiry aims to consider the ‘bigger picture’ within action research and the context in which the research is conducted plays a significant part in the process and outcome (Marshall 2011). Senge (2006), Flood (1999), and Armson (2011) demonstrate how environment plays a vital role in systems thinking and how organisations adapt their systems to suit the changing context. This was seen when undertaking Inquiry Stream 2 with senior managers of Bolton at Home needing to react to current policy and predict future developments that may affect the financial viability of the organisation and how Bolton at Home engages in neighbourhoods. I decided to include questions about the external environment and Bolton at Home’s response to changing contexts within the aforementioned Inquiry Stream and also for the Neighbourhood Management Team in Inquiry Stream 3. I identified a number of contextual factors that had a significant impact on my research design at the beginning and throughout the research process (Figure 8). The thickness of the lines simplistically implies levels of influence and power and the relationships between the key actors. One of the most influential factors is the macro global economic climate, the recession in 2008, and strength of economies around the world which affects the choices made by policy makers regarding funding and ideological persuasions that influence political priorities. Local government and partners such as the National Health Service and the police are reliant on

central government for income and beholden to more legislative requirements compared to housing associations that have a greater degree of autonomy and can access independent funding from the financial sector.

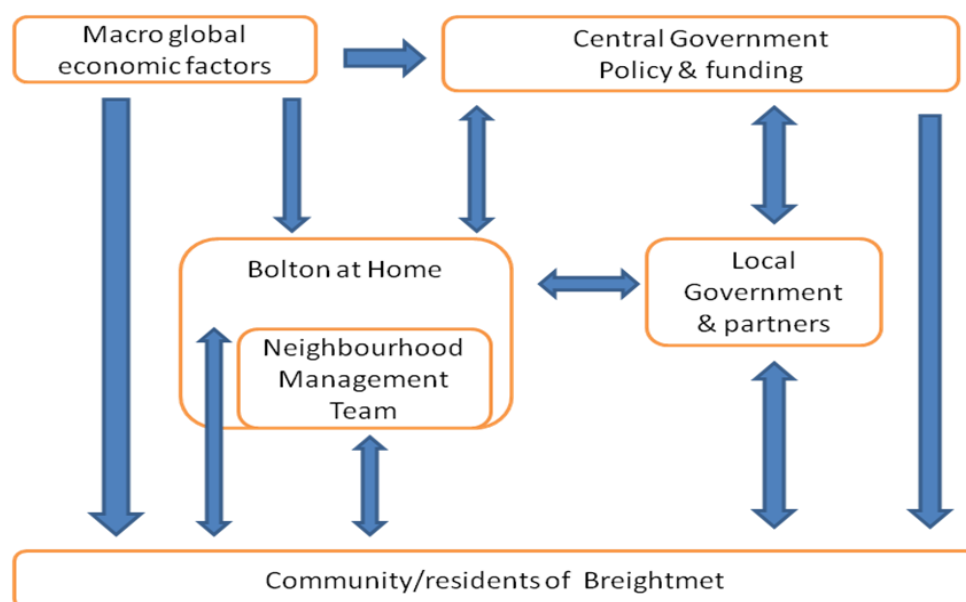


Figure 8 Contextual factors

Other relevant factors included the area of Brightmet itself and the residents and their relationships with the Neighbourhood Management Team, other teams in Bolton at Home, service providers and Bolton Council. It was also important to note the impact of the macro global economic factors and impact of central government policies on people's lives as well as their ability and willingness to engage with service providers. The nature of partnership working between Bolton at Home as a housing association, and local government, in this case Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council and partners was another important consideration. This relationship occurs at different levels: strategic higher level discussions and on an operational basis at neighbourhood or area level. This relates to the ability of staff within these agencies to participate in a research inquiry when they need to make sense and adapt to the changing macro and micro context.

Organisational characteristics such as resources, history, and formal and informal organisations and the degrees of congruence between them, affect the readiness and capability for participating in action research (Coghlan, and Brannick 2010: 4).

3.5.2 The emergent and changing nature of action research

As emphasised, being aware of the context in which the research takes place and working with participants in a way that suits them is of paramount importance. I was very conscious of working around the time commitments and responsibilities of the Neighbourhood Management Team, senior managers and residents, many of whom had a day job or volunteer activities. Within the research design, I planned for adaptation and flexibility so I could develop an adequate understanding of the setting, organisation and community and allow participants to influence the direction of the inquiry. In order to summarise the significant contextual factors, Table 2 illustrates how each key event or aspect influenced the research setting, participants and therefore impact upon the research design. Detailed discussion of other contextual aspects is provided in each of the Inquiry Stream chapters.

Inquiry Stream	Contextual Factors	Impact on research design
Inquiry Stream 1: Residents	Bolton at Home frames the focus of the research with the IDS project proposal with emphasis on exploring why residents in Breightmet are not engaging with the Neighbourhood Management Team.	<i>A pure version of Participatory Action Research is not possible given the initial focus, limited resident involvement and time available. How can I enable residents to participate in the inquiry in a way that suits them and capture their lived experience?</i>
Inquiry Stream 2: Organisation	<p>Coalition Government introduce programme of spending cuts in 2010. Community Engagement has less emphasis and fewer resources are available for regeneration.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bolton Council reviews budgets, reduces services. • As a result, Bolton at Home becomes deliverer not just facilitator of neighbourhood management. • Stock Transfer Ballot 2010 Bolton at Home becomes a Housing Association and conducts internal review of UCAN Centres. 	<p>Within Bolton at Home: There is growing uncertainty and pressure to do more with less money in deprived neighbourhoods.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value for money is increasingly important. • There is concern about how deprived areas most affected by economic context and cuts will cope during the recession. <p><i>I recognise that the research needs to be systemic and so interconnected Inquiry Streams at strategic and operational levels are developed. The research needs to provide tangible and practical outcomes for the organisation and NMT and consider implications for engagement strategy and practice and the role of Bolton at Home in regeneration.</i></p>

Inquiry Stream 3: Neighbourhood Management Team (NMT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personnel issues in the team make prioritising time for the research difficult as staff do not have time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I need to work to support the NMT's practice and acknowledge the importance of showing the value to them of participating in the research. I choose to conduct interviews first and then a group process to build on initial findings.</i>
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Table 2 Examples of Contextual Factors and their impact on research design

When it is done well, with attention paid to issues of participation and the contextual nuances, an emergent research design can ensure that action research is as intended; a quality process that adapts as a result of the cycles of action and reflection in collaboration with participants or co-researchers. However a flexible design does present methodological challenges, especially when undertaking separate but linked Inquiry Streams at different levels. In my case with both residents and Bolton at Home staff, I needed to negotiate different agendas and facilitate the process to suit all involved to deal with possible conflict of interests and to ensure one group did not dominate the whole inquiry.

On reflection, I was good at adapting to circumstance and being flexible, using “intuition and feeling in everyday activity” (Fals Borda 1998: 180) when it was not possible to know at the time where something may lead or indeed what level of importance it would have in the research. My research objectives emerged as a consequence of the action and reflection from the inquiry streams and started with an imperfectly understood felt concern and a desire to take action (McTaggart 1996). To overcome any challenges encountered and the indeterminate nature of the Inquiry Streams, I became very reflective and reflexive of observations, analyses, interpretation of findings and events and my involvement in the process of the research itself and the choices made. I also checked assumptions and conclusions with critical friends (both academic and practitioner) who had no attachment to the setting in which I was based but had expert knowledge in the subject area.

With the challenges of emergent design in mind, I briefly share my personal reflections about the process of writing up the research. My intention was to produce an accessible, linear and interesting account that is easy to understand and makes sense to anyone without prior knowledge of the subject area, research approach or context in which the inquiry was situated. However, to enable emergent developmental inquiries to grow meant that the process of undertaking action research was, at times, stressful, intuitive, and uncertain. Burns (2006) suggests that systemic inquiry often feels like “a messy and sometimes

confusing brew of method, inspiration, success, failure, negotiation and above all learning” (Burns 2006:186). As Burgess (2006) explains, this emergent process based on participation is often in contradiction to an action researcher’s personality, preferred way of working or need for control. Nevertheless, researchers need to be “honest and vulnerable about our wrestling and searching and striving” (Snoeren, Niessen and Abma 2011:202). Mellor (2010) argues that by presenting research as a neat and tidy progression of events, researchers are pretending that what actually happened was the plan all along. I have sought to provide an honest and authentic account by providing a piece of reflection at the end of the three Inquiry Stream chapters (4-6) and within section 7.5 in the Discussion chapter because I am mindful that,

All researchers make mistakes, these are often the most valuable learning opportunities ... To present research as a smooth unblemished process of conception, exploration analysis and discussion is not only unconvincing it is fraudulent and dishonest (Wilson 1997 cited in Mellor 2010: 97).

3.5.3 Role of the action researcher

Coghlan and Brannick’s (2010) comprehensive account of Insider Action Research and embarking on an action research project as an employee of the organisation you are researching was extremely useful when making decisions about research design. Even though not a member of staff in Bolton at Home, I could relate to a significant number of the issues faced by an ‘insider action researcher’ as I was based with the organisation on a full time basis. These included understanding where power lies, negative reactions to a more critical perspective of the work of the organisations, and in some instances, limited opportunities for open and honest dialogue. Insider action researchers need to be attentive of role and position when attempting to gain a critical understanding, and create conditions for change (Coghlan and Brannick 2010). I was also aware of the number of insider action researchers who experienced conflict and/or left their jobs after starting an action research project that investigated the organisation they worked for (Humphrey 2007; Moore 2007; Pettigrew 2003). It was vital therefore that within the research process, I developed effective relationships and feedback mechanisms with all involved with the research directly and indirectly and find a way to manage political relationships effectively (Coghlan and Brannick 2005). An important first step was therefore to gain an in-depth appreciation of all aspects of Bolton at Home, Breightmet, staff and residents, as well as identify the different and competing power agendas (Burns 2007; Marshall 2011).

As a researcher embedded in an organisation and based in a community setting, but not an employee or practitioner (an insider) or a consultant or university based researcher (outsider) who comes to work with insiders on an action inquiry, I could not easily relate to these two roles. But as indicated by O'Leary (2012) there are relatively few studies beyond the 'insider' / 'outsider' dualism noted by Bartunek and Louis (1996). When undertaking insider action research in the organisation where the researchers also work as employees, studies have discussed a sense of role duality that I could appreciate during my research. In this instance, insider action researchers have been described as a 'schizo' (Mehta 2008), political entrepreneur (Pettigrew 2003) and insider-outsider of both the organisation and academic community due to the nature of the role (Humphrey 2007). I could relate to this as many Bolton at Home staff considered me to be an outsider, despite being based with the NMT on a full time basis. This perception may have enabled a greater level of access to people and more honest conversations than if I had been viewed as an insider. Having said that, I was also mindful that "notions of boundaries are our creation" (Marshall, Coleman and Reason 2011: 46), that roles can change (O'Leary 2012), and an important skill for an engaged researcher is to live with ambiguities (Levin and Ravn 2007). I reflected upon questions about what action researchers may promise participants and present themselves and how to balance research and organisational activity (Morton 1999). Indeed O'Leary (2012) contends that if the research is created with an organisation saying to a researcher, 'we have a problem - fix it for us', this could potentially undermine any hope of securing more ownership for the research from staff and attempt to adopt a more collaborative process further down the line. Influenced by Barrett and Taylor's (2002) experience when working with health care professionals, I wished to be seen as a 'change energiser' when working with Bolton at Home staff. This meant that I wanted to facilitate discussion and reflection, rather than imposing my analysis or views on senior managers or the NMT.

Since starting my PhD, I became a Board Member of City West Housing Trust, a housing association that owns and manages the social housing of West Salford. This is a governance and scrutiny role that decides the strategy and direction of the association and engages with four tenants as part of the board structure. This position has given me opportunities to reflect upon my research give consideration to the nature of housing providers in delivering regeneration objectives. It has also allowed me to gain insight into how the housing sector develops relationships with customers and understands community engagement strategy and practice.

3.5.4 Quality of relationships

Authors suggest that people involved in action research are agents who act in the world on the basis of their own sensemaking (Coghlan and Brannick 2010). Throughout the research, the quality of relationships between me as a researcher and participants was paramount. I wanted to develop relationships with staff and residents based on trust, concern for others, equality of influence, and a common language (Coghlan and Brannick 2010). Residents, senior managers and the Neighbourhood Management Team needed to feel an integral part of the Inquiry Streams and take ownership of the process and outcomes. This meant designing the research for the involvement of participants in all stages of the process including design, data collection and analysis and dissemination. In addition, as the focus of the research was the engagement of residents in activities and service design, delivery and evaluation within a regeneration context, it was important to use the learning I had gained from my literature review about participation to inform my actions. As discussed in section 3.4.1, I was strongly influenced by the social justice intent of PAR. I was optimistic about facilitating a process “tailored to the desires of the research participants” (McIntyre 2008: 5), involving “an imaginative leap from the world as it is to the world how it could be” (Wadsworth 1998: 6). Following Reason’s (1994) assertion that people involved in research must be invited, I made clear to potential participants that involvement in the research was optional. Purposive sampling (Brewer and Hunter 2006) and snowball sampling (Patton 2002) was used to identify who would be most relevant to the research or affected by the topic under examination. For the resident interviews I conducted, I met a couple of residents already engaged with Bolton at Home and had become involved with staff following events, visiting the UCAN, or as they were part of an existing group (section 4.3.1).

My intention was to develop reciprocal relationships with participants that were supportive but “critically subjective” (Reason 1988: 11). I did not wish to be directive but instead wanted to “teach people to question answers rather than answer questions” (Ledwith and Springett 2010: 21). Co-operative Inquiry is used within organisational settings as it provides a way for employees of an organisation to come together to critically reflect and develop their practice (Baldwin 2002; Barrett and Taylor 2002; Kakabadse, Kakabadse and Kalu 2007). As co-researchers, employees of organisations engage in cycles of action and reflection and take ownership of the inquiry process. In the action phases they experiment with new forms of personal or professional practice. In the reflection phase they reflect on their experience critically, learn from their successes and failures, and develop theoretical perspectives which inform their work in the next action phase (Reason 1999). As the Neighbourhood Manager had identified that community engagement in Brightmet

was a challenge for the Neighbourhood Management Team (NMT), this aligns with the rationale for Cooperative Inquiry that staff may be trying to “solve a current problem in their work and life” (Reason 1988: 22). I decided that Co-operative Inquiry may be a good way of exploring the NMT’s practice, by linking together their first person practice with their collective second person reflections and from this develop plans for action.

3.5.5 Determining quality in action research

Academics have written about issues of quality, validity and credibility in qualitative, naturalistic inquiry (Guba and Lincoln 1994) and suggest that “a new definition of rigour is required that does not mislead or marginalise action researchers” (Herr and Anderson 2005: 53). Johnson and Johnson (2010), Greenwood and Levin (1997), Herr and Anderson (2005) use values such as authenticity, fairness, credibility, validity, dependability and confirmability to validate the impact of inquiry based research. Coghlan and Brannick’s (2010) position is that action research should be “evaluated within its own frame of reference”.

As a result, my framework for evaluating the quality and validity of the action research is based on Reason and Bradbury (2001)’s characteristics of action research (section 3.2), particularly, the quality of participation during the inquiry and how this has led to action that impacted positively on practice and/or the lives of the participants. Also, quality in the action research should consider the extent to which the research has the potential for enduring consequence, improvement and transformation (Reason and Bradbury 2001). With reference to this criteria, I have included feedback, at the end of Inquiry Stream 2 and 3, I received from senior managers and the NMT (sections 5.5 and 6.8). In section 7.5, I evaluate the extent to which the research outcomes have been achieved and the views of participants on the process.

Another measure of validity and quality in action research comes from the perspective of the researcher. This is about the nature of engagement with others and capacity for self-reflection (Marshall and Reason 2007). Researchers need to maintain criticality, become reflective of their involvement and being authentic about who they are and what they bring to the research (Burgess 2006). The ability to become comfortable with uncertainty and the messy process of action research discussed in 3.5.2, developing self-awareness and making sense of feelings and emotions is a fundamental aspect of learning within first person inquiry. Levels of self-awareness, transparency and the articulation of the choices open to the researcher need to be expressed at each stage of the inquiry (Marshall 1999,

2004, 2011). My reflective diary was invaluable in capturing the choices I made, how I reacted to feedback. Brief reflective pieces at the end of the three Inquiry Stream chapters sections 4.7, 5.7 and 6.10 show the learning I gained and the nature of engagement with participants. Throughout the research, I also made efforts to ensure I was explicitly articulating my critical subjectivity to myself and others in the process.

We do not suppress our primary subjective experience that we accept our knowing is from a perspective; it also means that we are aware of that perspective, and its bias, and we articulate it in our communications. Critical subjectivity involves a self-reflexive attention to the ground on which one is standing (Reason 1994: 327).

3.5.6 Intended outcomes of action research

It was important that I contributed theoretical knowledge to an academic audience and also for my role on the Industrial Doctoral Scheme project, I was required to deliver practical benefit to Bolton at Home staff and local residents. I will briefly discuss the need to work towards different but connected outcomes in three inquiry settings (with senior managers, neighbourhood management team and residents) and whilst also ensuring the successful completion of this thesis. In terms of my contribution to knowledge about developing community engagement practice and strategy for regeneration, it is important to say that the research setting and context is highly specific and related to one organisation and one neighbourhood area. Given this, as shown in Chapter 2 Literature Review, successful regeneration interventions rarely translate from one neighbourhood to another as the process of engagement and service delivery is based on the historical events, culture of institutions and places and the people involved. Similarly, I apply the concept of ‘transcontextual credibility’ (Greenwood and Levin 2007) to the findings in this thesis. Transcontextual credibility describes an outcome achieved through the actions of participants in a given setting and suggests how this learning can be related to another place with others and developed further. To this end, section 8 provides details of how the research findings may be relevant to other housing associations or agencies seeking to engage local residents.

This section has stated the main characteristics of an action research approach and the important aspects such as the context, emergent nature of action research, quality of process and outcome and participation to ensure a credible and valid research process.

3.6 The Action Research Inquiry

In this section, I elaborate on my research strategy designed to best suit the research objectives and fit the needs of the participants and the context. In order to examine the development of community engagement strategy and practice of Bolton at Home and also to present the residents' lived experience, I used two strategies to design the research process:

1. The cycle model;
2. Different levels of inquiry.

3.6.1 The cycle model

As discussed in section 1.5, the cycle in action research provides a framework to guide the process and ensure the necessary stages of reflection and action. The actual process is not as straightforward as the model suggests as there can be mini cycles within major cycles and some cycles will place more emphasis on one phase than others (Reason 1994). Depending on the model, the researcher can start at any point in the cycle although the action research cycle models proposed by Coghlan and Brannick (2005, 2010) and Burns (2007) suggest beginning at the Pre-Step or planning phases respectively. Burns (2007) is a four stage model of planning, acting, observing and reflecting.

Coghlan and Brannick (2005) include a Pre-Step phase which is updated in 2010 to be an appreciation of the context before the constructing stage. Unlike other models that are have more steps, for example (Wadsworth 1996), I considered both models by Coghlan and Brannick (2005/2010) and Burns (2007) easy to apply within all three research settings. To suit the research context highlighted in section 3.5.1, I adapted both models to create my own cyclical process to apply within the Inquiry Streams (Figure 9). In some instances, I created numerous action research cycles in each of the Inquiry Streams and one specifically to explore my own practice as a researcher so that I could capture the 'meta-learning' from each stage (Coghlan and Brannick 2005).

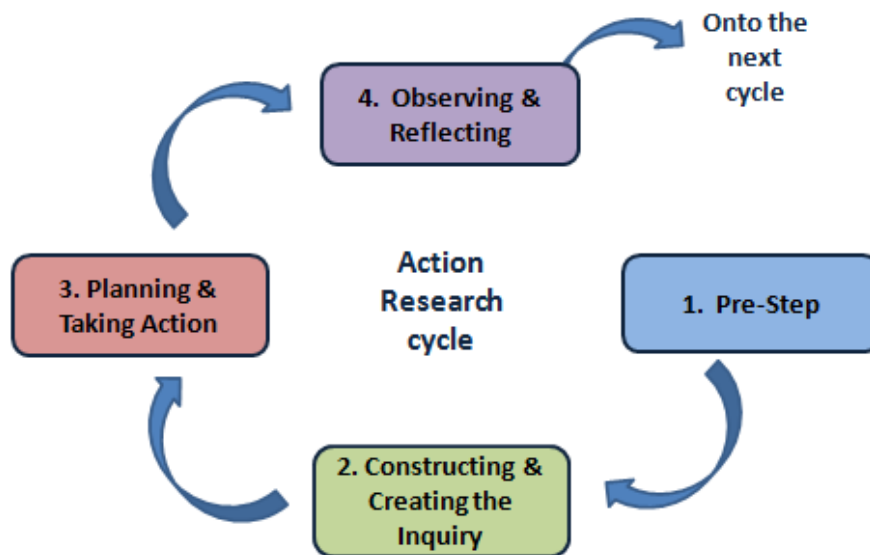


Figure 9 Action Research Cycle (adapted from Burns 2007: 12; Coghlan and Brannick 2010: 8)

The length of time to undertake an action research cycle or cycles varied depending on the activities undertaken, level of participation and availability of participants. In order to simplify the research process for the purposes of analysis and discussion, I have condensed the stages for the work with residents, senior managers and NMT into one action research cycle per Inquiry Stream. However as highlighted in section 3.5.2, a more iterative, organic and complex process took place over the course of the research. Each stage of the action research cycle is now discussed.

1. Pre-Step

As described by Coghlan and Brannick (2005), the action research process begins with the Pre-Step where the action researcher aims to needs to develop a full understanding of the research setting and phenomenon under investigation. I wanted to understand the politics, aims and objectives and the culture of the organisation, the Neighbourhood Management Team and area of Brightmet. I achieved this on my own by meeting staff of the organisation, partners, and residents, as well as attending meetings, and examining documents. Although I sourced literature throughout my inquiry to inform all stages of the process, I conducted the majority of my literature review for each inquiry stream at this stage to see how it could inform the construction of the inquiry and develop practice.

It is important to note that not all action research cycles need a Pre-Step stage. This is because some researchers may be familiar with the research setting and do not require the level of background information I considered important for the three Inquiry Streams or if continuing onto a new inquiry as shown in Figure 10.

2. Constructing and Creating the Inquiry

The second step is ‘Constructing and creating the inquiry’ and where the inquiry develops. This can occur through collaborative discussions about topics of interest or areas of concern, identification of problems or lessons learnt from past experience and gathering different perspectives. I consulted with staff to identify the main topic of interest to them that needed further exploration and discussed how this could be framed as an inquiry question.

3. Planning and Taking Action

The Planning stage is the “process of thinking through and developing our intention to act” (Burns 2007:12) and seeking collaborative agreement with participants about taking action. A formulated plan of intervention or information gathering, with an outline of times and expected outcome is required before the plans are implemented and findings are synthesised.

4. Observing and Reflecting

When observing, researchers and participants “find out what happened as a result of action” (Burns 2007:12). The reflection part of this phase involves cognitive, sensual and emotional sense making (Burns 2007) and where action is evaluated against the original construction. This is to decide how the knowledge generated has helped to solve the problem, explored the inquiry effectively and enabled critical reflection to occur. Here, the researchers and participants consider what could have been done differently and examines issues of quality. Figure 10 depicts how one action research cycle has successfully led to the development of a new inquiry within another action research cycle.

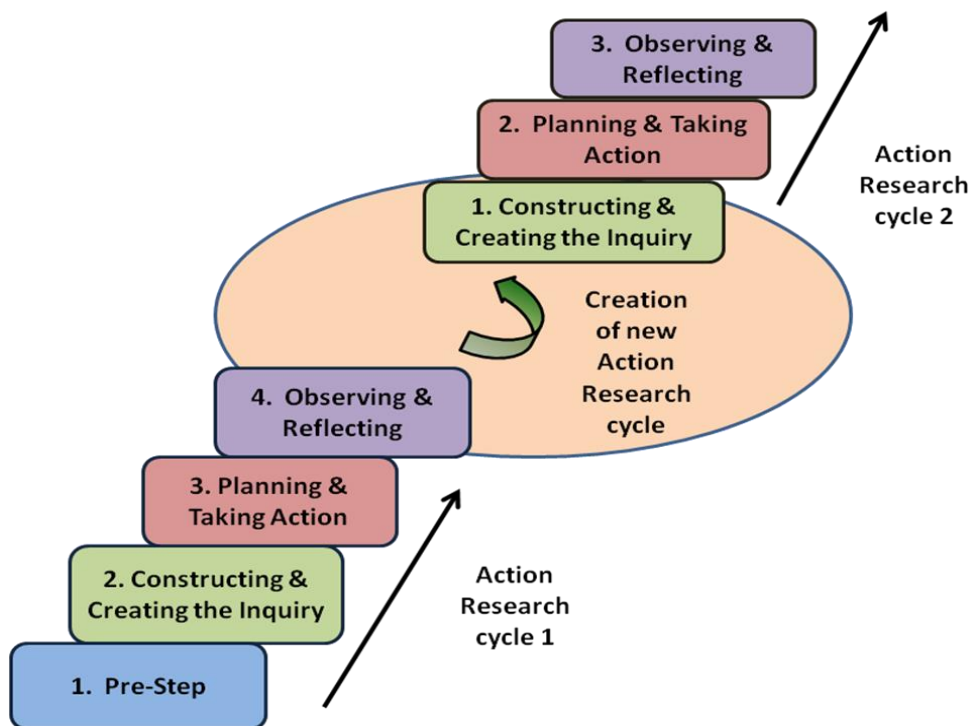


Figure 10 Progression of action research cycles

Example of utilisation of cycle model – PhotoBrightmet workshop

Figure 11 is an illustration of how I have used this cycle model, on a micro level, to plan, take action and reflect upon the facilitation of a PhotoBrightmet project workshop with staff and residents. For six months, Bolton at Home sponsored a ‘Photographer in Residence’ to spend time in the area, engage with residents and produce a collection of photographs for display in an exhibition at Bolton Museum and Art Gallery. The purpose of the project was to change the negative perception of Brightmet and celebrate the strengths of the neighbourhood and the people living there. I facilitated a resident and staff workshop with the Photographer in Residence and Museum curator to decide on a series of photographs from the project to go into the permanent Bolton Museum Photographic Archive.

During the Pre-Step stage I spoke with relevant people who were involved in the PhotoBrightmet Project and those attending the workshop to gather as much background information as possible to anticipate any issues. One concern was that there was a substantial difference of opinion between the Photographer in Residence and the NMT about which photographs should be displayed in the museum exhibition. As a result, the construction phase with the NMT centred on their expectations that the workshop would exacerbate this disagreement and that it would be hard to achieve a consensus within the time available.

We decided that the focus of the inquiry was about how effective facilitation could create a relaxed and positive environment where everyone could contribute and a consensus could be reached.

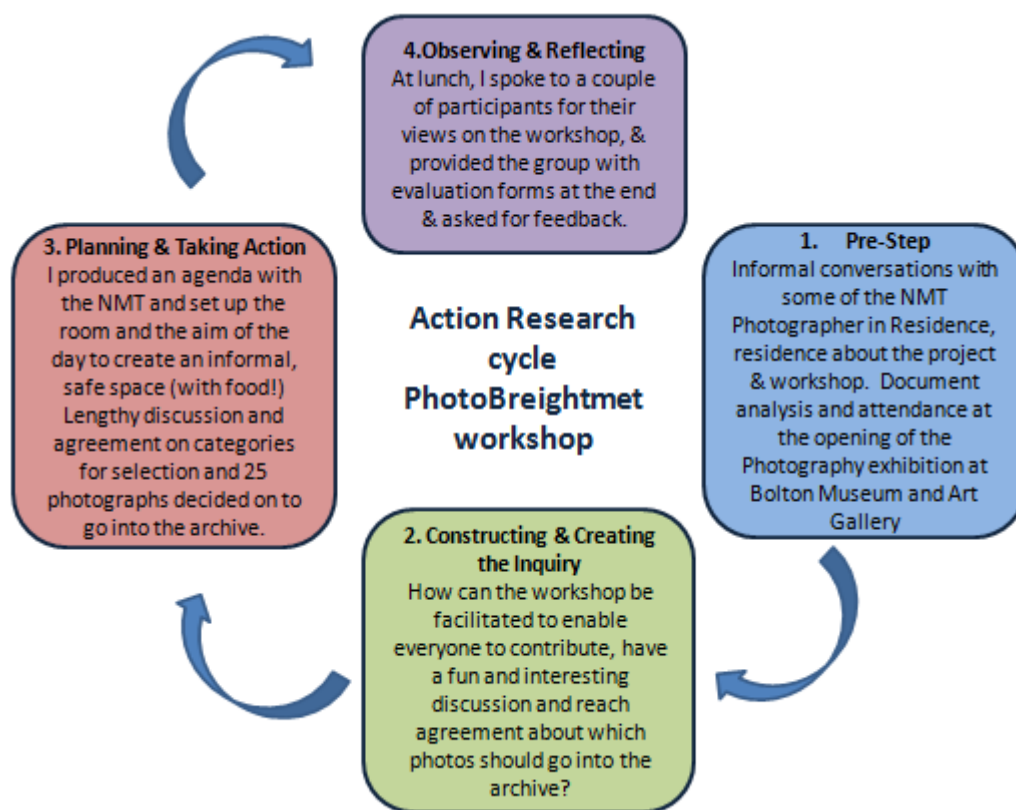


Figure 11 Action Research cycle example – PhotoBrightmet workshop

During the planning stage, I enhanced my skills and knowledge and worked with the NMT to produce a loose agenda to outline the activities and aim of the day. On the day, when taking action, the group examined the Spender Collection, discussed the best and worst aspects of Brightmet and asked questions about the archive criteria. In groups, participants identified categories that could be used to sort the photographs and in the whole group a set of categories was agreed (for example sports and leisure, and family). Following a long and enthusiastic discussion with all participants eager to contribute their view, 25 photographs were selected according to these categories. All participants were involved in the discussion and reached a consensus on the chosen photographs, without conflict. The observing and reflecting phase took place during the workshop where I checked in with participants for their view on the process and at lunch, when I asked for feedback from some of the NMT. At the end of the day, evaluation forms were distributed to all participants and all said they enjoyed the workshop and were happy with the outcome. As well as asking some of the NMT afterwards for feedback, I reflected on what I would have done differently and shared my analysis with the NMT to help them plan for future workshops.

3.6.2 Different levels of inquiry

Adopting a systemic approach to both the inquiry and understanding community engagement practice was vital as discussed in sections 2.6 and 3.3.2. I was keen to explore different levels of inquiry and practice in my research in order to explore the concepts within my theoretical framework and achieve outcomes for residents, the NMT and senior managers. I found that the supplementary levels from Coghlan (2002) were especially relevant to the work of the NMT and Bolton at Home. Bolton at Home as an organisation does not stand alone in its delivery of regeneration, working with many partners at strategic and operational contexts and as such, I realised attention should be paid to different levels of practice and inter-group and inter-organisational dynamics. In addition, from a Brightmet neighbourhood perspective, geographical areas and residents who live within them, do not exist in isolation. I was therefore conscious of being attentive to influences and factors that lead to social change inside and outside neighbourhood boundaries. Thinking systemically enabled me to identify a holistic intent in the research design when exploring the research objectives and connect the three research settings together. Figure 12 indicates the different levels of inquiry and impact that I identified within this inquiry for Bolton at Home, the residents of Brightmet and my first person inquiry.

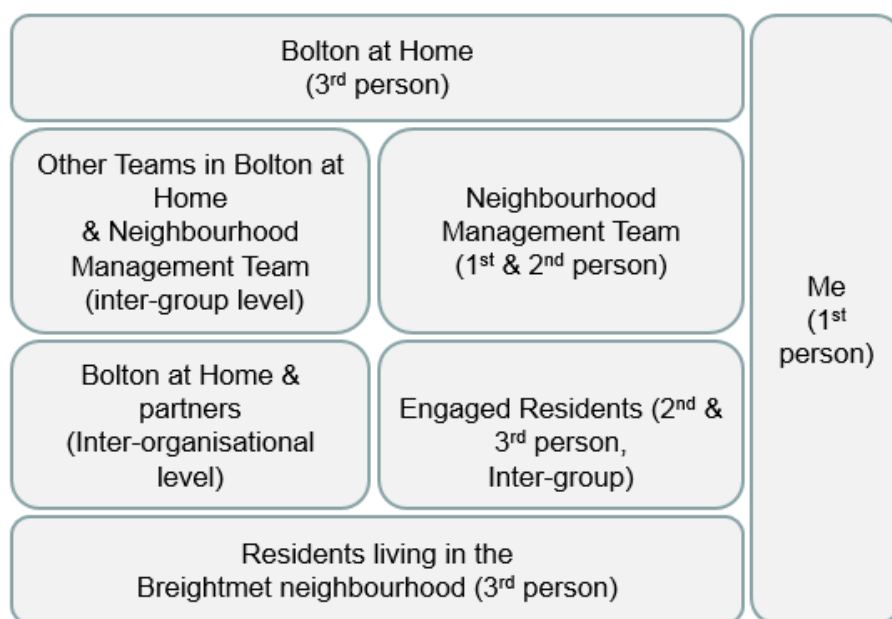


Figure 12 Different levels of 1st, 2nd and 3rd person inquiry

I refer to these various levels in the discussion but have mainly focused on second person inquiry when discussing findings from Inquiry Stream 2 with the Neighbourhood Management Team and Inquiry Stream 3 with senior managers. Two members of the NMT spent time with me reflecting and formulating plans for action and during the individual interviews, members of the team considered how to articulate and develop their model as first person inquiry.

Inquiry Stream 1 with residents was not as collaborative as intended, section 4.7, but the contextual understanding was important in supporting other levels of inquiry during the research. Third person inquiry is also the subject of Inquiry Streams 2 to consider the implications of implementing the NMT model of practice and section 8.1.2 discusses how practitioners can develop transformative engagement. In Inquiry Stream 3, the development of community engagement strategy, is organisationally focussed on Bolton at Home and section 7.4 in the Discussion chapter suggests how the findings have resonance for other housing associations undertaking regeneration in deprived neighbourhoods.

In a similar way to Burgess (2006) and Gibbon (2002) as individual doctoral researchers attempting to conduct highly participative action research, I was aware of the limitations that existed for me undertaking this multi-level approach that aimed to generate in-depth knowledge and impact upon both organisational and social settings. Marshall *et al.* (2011) notes the difficulty in integrating first and second person inquiry into a third person scale across an organisation or neighbourhood. Also, I noted that most studies exploring community engagement and development were conducted with a team of researchers. For example a three year community development intervention project in a deprived area of the USA had a dozen faculty members and 150 students working in the neighbourhood (Reardon, Welsh, Kreiswirth and Forester 1993).

3.7. Methods

I have used qualitative methods in my research because they allow for a closer degree of involvement with participants, the development of more meaningful relationships, and an exploration and understanding of the lives of people as they are really lived (Reason, 1988). Qualitative methods also enable a “high level of reflexivity for both the researcher and participants; a greater sensitivity to the rights of participants as people not subjects” (Henn, Weinstein and Foard 2006: 37). They also serve to describe what happens, why and how, with regard to a topic of importance to people.

Studying things in their natural settings attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them (Denzin and Lincoln 1994: 2).

I wanted to ensure that academic, organisational, practitioner and resident perspectives were explored with reference to different types of knowledge discussed in section 3.2.3. It was also important to encourage critical reflection and discussion and so I included a range of techniques and visual methods (Van der Riet 2008). As discussed by Burns (2006), the use of multiple methods enhances the scope for insight generation and enables important data to be surfaced.

To guide and develop the cycle of planning, acting, observing and reflecting within the three Inquiry Streams, the following activities took place and each is discussed in this section:

1. In-depth interviewing – semi-structured and unstructured;
2. Conceptual mapping;
3. Door knocking;
4. Focus groups;
5. Co-operative Inquiry Group (for the Neighbourhood Management Team);
6. Informal methods;
7. Reflective journal.

3.7.1 Interviewing

Interviewing has been the best method of data collection to develop a rapport with the research participants to create an active engagement and learning process for both interviewer and interviewee (Wibberley and Kenny 1994; Patton (2002). Interviewing was the main source of data collection for the research as it allowed me to gain a deeper understanding and “a way of uncovering and exploring the meanings that underpin people’s lives, routines, behaviours, feelings” (Rubin and Rubin 1995, cited in Arksey and Knight 1999: 33). Two types of interviewing were used; semi-structured interviews and unstructured interviews. In semi-structured interviews, the researcher has a specific agenda to follow and by selecting the relevant topics beforehand, the interview is loosely structured around a guide with key questions (Patton 2002). The benefit of a semi-structured approach to interviewing is that it is possible to improvise questions and clarify and extend answers (Arksey and Knight 1999). Semi-structured interviews were used with the senior managers and Neighbourhood Management Team in 2011 and 2012, and residents for the Urban Care and Neighbourhood Centres Internal Review in 2010. The reasons for this were because of the time constraints to undertake and transcribe the interviews, conduct analysis and, in the case of the UCAN Review, to write up the findings.

Advocates of unstructured interview approaches are critical of traditional approaches to interviewing where power dynamics favour the researcher who seeks to ‘manipulate’ participants to suit their own agenda (Oakley 2005). By proposing a more equal and reciprocal process based on the experiences of researcher and participants, a non-hierarchical process of sharing, which is of mutual benefit to both parties, can develop (Finch 1993). The disadvantage of unstructured approaches to interviewing is that they take longer to transcribe and analyse and the discussion may be unrelated to the subject of the research. Within the Inquiry 1 Residents Lived Experience, an unstructured, less directive role and more conversational approach to interviewing was adopted, to support and facilitate the action research process. This was to make the participants feel more comfortable, discuss the issues that were important to them and tell their story. I also simplified the consent form in case people had issues with literacy and asked for permission to record the interview so that I could concentrate on what was being said rather than taking notes.

3.7.2 Concept maps

The use of conceptual mapping is an effective and expressive way for people to generate thoughts about an abstract concept and gather multiple perspectives to generate further reflection and discussion (Emmel 2008; Armson 2011; Novak and Canas 2011). It is most commonly used in education or business settings to enable learning and practice development although the maps adopt certain prescriptive and linear compositions (Kane and Trochin 2006). Within Systemic Action Research, Burns (2007) invites participants to tell their story through the use of visual methods such as mind maps, echoing formats proposed by Buzan (2010), to build a systemic picture. This enables the articulation of inter-relationships and structural patterns to convey meaning and surface assumptions, in order to identify the significant issues regarding policy and service provision (Burns 2007). I was interested in how the use of creative expression in research can also provide a way to tap into people’s different ways of knowing (Marshall *et al.* 2011). As indicated by Green, Campbell and Grimshaw (2011), the use of diagrams, within interviews, as a lens for practitioners to reflect on their experience and practice in research has not been forthcoming in literature.

Towards the end of the interviews with senior managers of Bolton at Home and the Neighbourhood Management Team, each participant was invited to conceptualise community engagement based on the interview discussion (Appendix 3 and 4). In some instances the interviewee instructed me to produce the map for them, indicating what needed to be done. Rather than use a pre-existing format, like a mindmap, I wanted the participant to decide what form the map should take to best present their interpretation. This was to ensure the focus of the maps was on an exploration of participants' experience, understandings, perceptions and views (Reid, Flowers and Larkin 2005). This required me to "acknowledge and suspend any existing knowledge and personal experiences...in an attempt to 'see' the world as it is experienced by the respondent" (Flowers *et al.* 1998 cited in Brocki and Wearden 2006: 98).

The use of concept maps also ensured that the identities of the participants were kept anonymous to other participants in reports or group discussion and enabled me to begin analysis. The maps were either digitised by me or first year graphic design students at the University of Bolton and this, with the scanned original drawing and summary of the interview with key quotes, was sent to each participant for verification. If any changes to the drawings were made, the revised version was sent to the interviewee for final approval. Figure 13 is an example of a conceptual map done by one of the senior managers as part of the planning and taking action stage of Inquiry Stream 2: Development of Community Engagement Strategy. The analysis of the maps is discussed in section 3.8.

<div style="text-align: center;">↓</div> <p>Who do we talk to?</p> <p>Definition of 'community' according to people themselves or issue</p> <p>Could be</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demographic Geographic <p>Which type of community to deliver a solution for?</p>	Issue →	Economic	Social	education		
	Individual		X			
	Tenants					
	Street				X	
	Citizen	X				
	Kids					
	Parents			X		
	Social network					
	Group					
	Young people					
	families					

Tool box of engagement methods	
Method	
surveys	X
Residents Associations	
Customer Panels	
BATRA	
Customer Committee	
Community Researchers	X
Website	
Twitter/facebook	
Youth Outreach	

Figure 13 Concept map of Community Engagement by a Senior Manager for Inquiry Stream 2

3.7.3 Door knocking

I was hopeful that door knocking could be used to as a method of meeting local people, conducting interviews and as a way of recruiting residents to a critical reference group to create a participative action research process for the Inquiry Stream 1 Residents' Lived Experience. However as discussed in Chapter 4, I realised the scale of the challenge in engaging local people who lived in Brightmet. I followed Davies' (2008) advice to use a colourful and attractive leaflet to put through people's letterboxes a couple of days before door knocking and consider when residents are most likely to be at home. She said that she experienced much success with this research engagement method but warns that researchers need to be aware of safety considerations particularly if going into people's homes to interview. I was mindful of this during the planning and taking action stage of Inquiry Stream 1.

3.7.4 Focus groups

A focus group is a group interview on a specific topic with discussion guided by the researcher to explore a set of specific issues Robson (2002). Focus groups are an important collaborative method to share ideas, build consensus and identify differences of opinion and create plans for action. Chiu (2003) talks of the transformational potential of focus groups within an action research process and discusses how groups can be used for a range of different purposes. I facilitated two focus groups with Urban Care and Neighbourhood (UCAN) Centre staff for the UCAN Qualitative Evaluation. I also intended to set up a residents' focus group (Genat 2009) with residents following door knocking and interviewing to reflect upon their view of Brightmet and create an inquiry question of special interest to them. Unfortunately due to issues identified in Inquiry Stream 1, Chapter 4, there was not sufficient interest to set up a residents' focus group.

3.7.5 Co-operative Inquiry group

In order for me to feedback on the Neighbourhood Management Team interviews and visual mapping and to create a space for them to develop a collective inquiry about their community engagement practice in Brightmet; we set up a Co-operative Inquiry Group, informed by Co-operative Inquiry Action Research (Heron 1996; Reason and McArdle 2008). Within the group sessions, I encouraged individual and group reflection during workshops, developed my skills as a facilitator, brought relevant theories to the team to enable them to think critically about their work and establish different ways of knowing.

3.7.6 Informal methods

Informal, non-prescriptive conversation is “the key process through which forms of organization are dynamically sustained and changed” (Shaw 2002: 10). Using informal methods can be a valuable way of connecting with participants and gaining insight was invaluable to enabling communicative and reflective space to develop in inquiries. “Sense-making comes about through engaging with others in conversation” and action that is “embodied in changed practices and norms occurs as a result of these multiple conversations” (Burns 2006:183).

People in conversation are shaping and shifting the web of enabling-constraints in which they are enmeshed. They are constructing their future...in terms of what courses of action become possible (Shaw 2002: 51).

I adopted informal methods to collect data, examine my assumptions, develop my reflection and that of others and assist with analysis. These included face to face conversation, telephone phone calls, texts and emails were used with research participants, staff of Bolton at Home not directly involved with the inquiry, practitioners from other organisations and discussions with academics at meetings and conferences. This enabled me to make sense of the research context, generate ideas, validate my findings with others, and feedback to research participants on the inquiry streams. I frequently attended and participated in meetings with Bolton at Home staff and partners such as Neighbourhood Partnership meetings, Neighbourhood Team meetings, and project planning and evaluation meetings. I also attended the Customer Conference to meet with residents and also facilitated a number of discussion groups with staff, including a Neighbourhood Management Team Business Strategy Away Day and the PhotoBrightmet workshop with residents and staff.

On the whole, it did not appear appropriate to use a recording device at meetings, especially when attended by many people. Instead I took notes during or later that day to ensure I captured the details. When on a local tour with a resident, that was informal discussion about his views of the area that took place in some local pubs, I wrote up the main points of the discussion and his comments from memory immediately afterwards.

3.7.7 Reflective diary

A researcher becoming reflexive throughout the inquiry can help to ensure a check and balance mechanism on the choices and activities of the researcher and identify the meta-learning resulting from each stage of the inquiry (Coghlan and Brannick 2005). Reflective practice is significant in all levels of inquiry from first to third person as a way to become critical of our own actions (Marshall 2011). It is useful to reframe existing experience and knowledge to suggest new possibilities for acting and being in the world (Heron 1996). I used a reflective journal to undertake my first person inquiry (Marshall 1999, 2004). Brockbank and McGill (2007) and Moon (2006) encourage the use of reflective diaries to develop practice and enable deeper learning to take place. I recorded my observations and thoughts about participants, the environment and actions, and made sense of events and activities. I charted the changes in my thinking and the development of insight and my plans for action, and generated ideas and questions. Keeping a reflective journal also assisted with my analysis and helped to keep track of research process and my involvement with it within the 'meta action research cycles' of each stage (Coghlan and Brannick 2010). I included written and audio notes, drawings, mind maps, and items of interest to me in the news or following conversations with those unconnected to the research. My experiences as a tenant board member and action researcher, as well as discussions with friends, family, other practitioners, researchers and critical friends developed my thinking and are noted within my diary. As such I strongly identify with concept of 'living life as inquiry', where:

The boundary between research and life generally is held open...to maintain curiosity through inner and outer arcs of attention... and open to continual question what I know, feel, do and want and finding ways to engage actively in this questioning and process its stages (Marshall 1999: 156-60).

3.8 Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to identify themes from notes, taped and transcribed interviews, discussions with staff and residents, and the visual mapping. In thematic analysis, the researcher searches and codes the data and identifies a number of themes based on categories with similar meaning. Themes are identified by bringing together components or fragments of ideas or experiences, which often are meaningless when viewed alone (Rapley 2007). I initially coded as I transcribed the data, checked my interpretations with participants and kept analytic memos in my reflective journal (Saldana 2009). For each interview and concept map, in addition to a full transcription, I created a thematic map showing the main topics and points covered, to link to other aspects of the discussion.

This served two purposes; firstly to highlight and code the salient points quickly and easily from each participant without getting weighed down with the detail (Saldana 2009) and secondly, to compare with other maps created. This enabled me to conduct analysis on an individual and collective basis and identify convergence and divergence of views (Burns 2007). After each interview, a summary document was produced with key themes, and related quotes from our conversation for verification purposes and to gather feedback for the next stage of each action research cycle. Individual themes from the interviews, mapping and discussions were synthesised to create broader findings with reference to literature that incorporate numerous perspectives. These were then reported back to the NMT and senior managers.

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was used to analyse and interpret the conceptual mapping on an individual and collective basis. IPA has its origins in the interpretative tradition and symbolic interactionism where people “come to interpret their world by formulating this own biographical stories in a form that makes sense to them” (Brocki and Wearden 2006). The joint reflections of both participant and researcher form the analytic account produced (Brocki and Wearden 2006) and the aim is to explore, flexibly and in detail, an area of concern (Smith and Osborn 2003). Following a IPA process advocated by Smith (1999), the concept maps were studied with the interview transcripts to elicit emergent themes. These were then clustered and narrative accounts, using verbatim extracts from the interviews, were created around these groupings. Finally, I looked for patterns across all the concept maps and to establish dissonance between them and did a final reading of the original transcripts to ensure the analysis is grounded in the participants’ accounts (Brocki and Wearden 2006).

It is vital to speak with people about analytic reflections to “provide a ‘reality check’ for the researcher and possibly stimulate additional insights” (Saldana 2009: 181). Based on work done by McNiff and Whitehead (2005), I involved others in the role of observers and critical friends in the validation process. I had regular conversations with other researchers and practitioners for their views to test the robustness of my conclusions. In addition, I spoke to staff based in other housing associations to ensure the transferability of the findings, and relevance of the analytic frameworks and reports I produced. The critical friend function has been fulfilled, in part, by my supervisors and the Neighbourhood Management Team, other PhD students and practitioners who listened to my ideas and challenged my analysis. Additional critical feedback was offered by a traditional social science researcher based with the police exploring community engagement for their PhD. We discussed the different research inquiries we had designed and the challenges of

working with organisations and negotiating often competing agendas. Throughout the study, I also regularly conversed with an Enablement Officer from a UK council housing department who helped me to develop my understanding of housing and regeneration from a local authority perspective and test my assumptions.

3.9 Ethical Issues

As discussed, action research is an unfolding, emergent process that evolves through cycles of action and reflection, and therefore it may not be possible to foresee all concerns prior to starting the research and working with participants (Truman 2003). Ethical practice is a changing intuitive process. It is affected by the relationships developed and activity undertaken meaning that issues of consent need to be continually negotiated throughout the study (Locke, Alcorn and O'Neill 2011). It was accepted that dilemmas arise which I, as the action researcher must resolve in the particular research context (Coghlan and Shani 2005). I was mindful of the key ethical questions for researchers working in political organisations in a collaborative manner,

- *How can confidentiality and anonymity be assured if collaborating?*
 - *How can informed consent be meaningful if action research evolves?*
 - *If action research is political how can researchers avoid doing harm to participants?*
- (Coghlan and Brannick 2010: 134).

To address these issues, I was transparent, honest and open with participants about my intention and the work I was doing, and gave assurances that anonymity would be respected. I made all participants aware that their involvement was voluntary and they could withdraw from the research at any time. I secured University ethical approval and I created information sheets about the research and adapted the information to suit each participant and the activity in which they were involved (Appendix 1). I produced a consent form (Appendix 2) which was emailed to Bolton at Home staff and explained to residents in advance of an arranged interview. This included agreement for the interview to be recorded and data from the discussion and concept maps to be used in publications. If there was ambiguity regarding the use of data or participants' involvement in subsequent stages, I asked for written agreement, to ensure that they were comfortable with what was taking place. All names and identifying information have been removed or changed to protect the participants' identity.

3.10 Inquiry Stream Activity

As discussed in section 3.3.2 and 3.6.2, systemic approaches to research take into account ‘the whole’ and explore inter-relationships, inter-level dynamics and the environment. Suzuki (1970) says “we murder wholes by dissecting them into parts, yet expect to put the parts back together to recreate the original living whole” (cited in Flood 1999: 14). The use of multiple inquiry streams can initiate discussion “across the breadth and depth of an organisational system” and this means “greater emphasis on the role of the facilitator in ‘holding’ a complex multi stranded process” (Burns 2006: 184). These conversations can be informal dialogue or group discussion but are interlinked with an orientation towards action and changing the status quo.

An inquiry stream is a series of linked meetings which explore issues and constructs action over a period of time (Burns 2007: 184).

I was interested in how first, second, and third person research inquiry streams could evolve and interlink over the duration of the study and this led me to develop three Inquiry Streams. By linking the three Inquiry Streams, I designed my inquiry to work across various levels detailed earlier to produce findings that reflected the ‘original living whole’, rather than a dissection of parts. A summary of the Inquiry Streams is outlined in Table 3 with the participants, key events and which part of the action research cycle they correspond.

Inquiry Stream	Pre-step stage	Constructing & Creating the inquiry	Planning & Taking action	Observing & Reflecting
Inquiry Stream 1: Chapter 4: Residents’ Lived Experience <i>Residents</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews with residents for UCAN Review Informal discussions with residents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are residents’ views of Brightmet and their experience of engagement? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual & group discussions Meetings & events Door knocking & interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Differing perceptions of the area Identification of implications for engagement practice

Inquiry Stream 2: Chapter 5: Development of Community Engagement Strategy <i>Senior Managers</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff interviews & focus groups for UCAN Review • Audit of Bolton at Home engagement • Document analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is community engagement to senior managers and why do it? • What is the role of Bolton at Home in regeneration? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual manager interviews & mapping • Report produced of findings from interviews & mapping & questions for further discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement Strategy Framework created • Discussions held with senior managers about how findings can develop CE strategy & practice
Inquiry Stream 3: Chapter 6: Developing Community Engagement Practice <i>Neighbourhood Management Team (NMT)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussions with the team • Audit of current engagement activity • Document analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is community engagement to you & what have you learnt about engaging residents in Brightmet? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual team interviews • Team workshops to discuss findings from interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team reflect on their concept of community engagement practice & barriers to operation • Creation of new inquiry

Table 3 Inquiry Streams with action research cycle activities

3.11 Summary

This chapter has provided an outline of action research as an approach to inquiry and the important characteristics such as context, quality of relationships and the process, and outcomes of research. I have described my research design which uses an action research cycle with four stages including Pre-Step, Constructing and Creating the inquiry; Planning and Taking Action and Observing and Reflecting. I have discussed the different levels of my research and the emergent design with an appreciation of the strengths and weaknesses to such an approach. I have provided rationale for my qualitative research data collection methods and analysis and how I addressed the ethical issues involved in undertaking the research. Finally the research design with three interlinked Inquiry Streams was discussed that relates to the research methods and different inquiry levels.

The next chapter is the first Inquiry Stream that explores the Lived Experience of Brightmet Residents.

Chapter 4: Inquiry Stream 1 - Residents' Lived Experience



Plate 1 PhotoBrightmet Workshop 19.03.11

The Photo Brightmet project launched in 2009 and its purpose was to change the negative perception of Brightmet and celebrate the strengths of the neighbourhood. For six months, Bolton at Home sponsored a 'Photographer in Residence' to spend time in the area, engage with residents and produce a collection of photographs for display in an exhibition at Bolton Museum and Art Gallery. I facilitated a resident and staff workshop with the Photographer in Residence and Museum Curator to decide on a series of photographs from the project to go into the permanent Bolton Museum Photographic Archive.

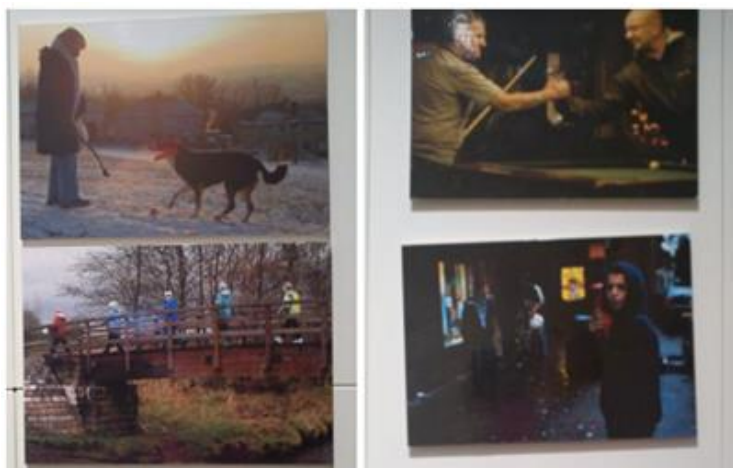


Plate 2 Examples of Photos from the Photographer in Residence Project 2011

Introduction

This chapter presents Inquiry Stream 1: the Residents' Lived Experience, providing an account of data collected from residents of Brightmet about their views of living in the area, service providers and implications for community engagement practice. It precedes Inquiry Stream 2: Development of Community Engagement Strategy and Inquiry Stream 3: Developing Community Engagement Practice from a practitioner and service provider stance. As with the other Inquiry Streams, I followed an action research process shown in Table 5. I started with a Pre-Step stage that consisted of speaking to residents already engaged with the Neighbourhood Management Team (NMT) through informal chats, meetings and the Urban Care and Neighbourhood (UCAN) Centre Review and developing knowledge of the Brightmet neighbourhood.

Inquiry Stream	Pre-step stage	Constructing & creating the inquiry	Planning & taking action	Observing & reflecting
Inquiry Stream 1: Chapter 4: Residents' Lived Experience <i>Residents</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with residents for UCAN Review • Informal discussions with residents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are residents' views of Brightmet and their experience of engagement? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual & group discussions • Meetings & events • Door knocking & interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differing perceptions of the area • Identification of implications for engagement practice

Table 4 Inquiry Stream 1: Residents' Lived Experience

As outlined in section 3.4, my intention was to create a Participatory Action Research (PAR) process with the residents of Brightmet and explore more broadly the relationship between residents, the NMT, Bolton at Home and other service providers in the neighbourhood. In this chapter, informal conversations with residents and door knocking and interviews with residents in a specific locality of Brightmet are discussed. The Inquiry Stream explored the issues, challenges and barriers residents face when engaging with service providers and the implications for practitioners for the development of practice in Brightmet are suggested. Findings from this Inquiry Stream contributed to the following research objectives to:

- *Characterise the lived experience of residents of the Brightmet neighbourhood and the experience of community engagement with Bolton at Home (RO 1);*
- *Examine the extent to which the research has helped to develop organisational community engagement strategy and practice and enable the voices of residents to be heard (RO 5).*

4.1 Pre-Step

In the first instance, it was of paramount importance to gain an in-depth understanding of the Brightmet neighbourhood, gathering details about past engagement in regeneration schemes that took place over the last 20 years and speaking to former practitioners for their view of the area and community engagement. Data collection methods for practitioner perspectives, during the Pre-Step, included data from Bolton Council and Bolton at Home consultations, and attending meetings, for example the Brightmet Neighbourhood Partnership Meeting. Conversations were held with the Neighbourhood Management Team (NMT) about previous door knocking undertaken for the stock transfer ballot in 2010 and the NMT interviews, regarding their experiences of working in Brightmet, and attempts to engage local people were examined. I also interviewed six Brightmet residents for the Urban Care and Neighbourhood (UCAN) Centre Review and spoke to members of a local community group. My findings from the Pre-Step stage have been grouped under the following headings:

1. Previous regeneration and community engagement;
2. Impact of current engagement on residents;
3. Lack of community capacity and recruiting residents to the inquiry;
4. Ethical and emotional issues.

4.1.1 Previous regeneration and community engagement

In the Introduction, I introduced the Brightmet neighbourhood and provided some detail about the levels of poverty and multiple deprivation faced by residents after years of unemployment and lack of investment in the area. As well as speaking to the NMT about their perceptions of the neighbourhood, I interviewed community-based staff who had, previously, worked in Brightmet from the early 1990s to the mid-2000s. These former practitioners were responsible for Community Housing Management services in the area and the implementation of regeneration schemes. They worked with residents to try and halt the decline of the area and “remove the worst families causing trouble” (former Brightmet practitioner interview 08.02.11). The area in the photograph below is known locally as Top’ o’ Th’ Brow (TOB) and it is one of the most deprived areas in the country (IMD 2010). Although part of the Brightmet neighbourhood, TOB is contained within the very affluent ward of Bradshaw. Bradshaw has been a pre-dominantly Conservative ward since the 1980s and is typical of the level of granularity that exists where “poorer people may be displaced or increasingly marginalised in small enclaves within a larger ‘gentrified’ area” (Henderson *et al.* 2007: 1446). The perceived lack of political representation of councillors and accountability to TOB residents was a concern for the NMT.

Two former practitioners said that in the late 1990s, New Lane in Brightmet had the highest number of empty homes in the whole of the borough of Bolton, despite being the smallest social housing catchment area. This was because Brightmet had such a poor reputation and consequently, there was very little demand for properties on the estate. Bolton council therefore devised an allocations policy for housing that was not perhaps as robust as it is today given higher waiting lists for homes.

Around 30-40% of our [Bolton council] stock was difficult to let [so] part of our response to that was to let anybody in the property, completely....because we need to fill them (Former Brightmet practitioner interview 08.02.11).



Plate 3 New Lane Shops, Brightmet (Photograph taken in 2010 before the new UCAN opened)

A story provided by a former practitioner working in the area illustrated the lack of police response, in the 2000s, to a major outbreak of fighting in the street, as the police were called and failed to turn up to deal with the trouble makers. The ex-practitioner said that this sent out the message to the community that their concerns and safety were not important for the police and would be ignored (field notes of a conversation 20.10.11). The scale of the challenge working in Brightmet was raised by ex-practitioners back in the 1990s and the 2000s and can be illustrated by this comment:

No one ever wanted to work there; it was seen as a constant challenge. But I loved it. If [residents] had issues, they would come to see you at the window with some choice language! (Former Brightmet practitioner interview 22.11.11)

One former Brightmet practitioner said that Brightmet always felt and looked different to other neighbourhoods in Bolton because “you used to come across behaviour and attitudes you didn’t in other areas” (interview 22.11.11). Regeneration activity in Brightmet in the late 1990s, particularly in the New Lane area, was led by Bolton Community College and

Bolton Council Housing department who had a strong presence in the area with a Housing Office and numerous staff. A volunteer-run laundrette was opened for residents and provided Bolton at Home staff with important ways into the local community and was a source of information. One practitioner told me how this became a hub for the residents and a play area was developed nearby so that children could play while the mums were doing their washing. A couple of residents' groups existed at the time that mainly consisted of women and older people who were desperate to see improvements made in their street or within their properties.

I think the key thing at the time [for residents] was the sense of abandonment...that housing had abandoned the area... In terms of housing, we'd have to have dug a hole to get our reputation any lower. It was rock bottom. (Former Brightmet practitioner interview 08.02.11)

The Greenroyd Action Group was set up to tackle anti-social behaviour and issues experienced by residents on Greenroyd Avenue (off New Lane) and two terraced houses were made available for the use of the community by Bolton Council, as it became more community focused in its work. These houses were turned into one property and became known as 'The Art House'. Numerous arts-based educational projects, mainly for children, were funded by Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council, Bolton Community Homes, Housing Percent for Art service and Bolton Community College and linked with local schools and the library. A key driver for much activity and engagement of local people and service providers was Les Elvin, a Brightmet resident who was responsible for organising annual lantern parades, events and projects.

In 2000, a facility was set up for residents to use computers in New Lane shops (Plate 3) and literacy and numeracy courses were held upstairs so that local people did not have to travel to the centre of Bolton. This space is now the UCAN centre and is used to undertake similar activities and a plethora of other services discussed in Chapter 6. It was suggested by one practitioner that Brightmet did not receive its fair share of targeted monies from the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB 6) £20 million for the whole of the borough in 2000. Two practitioners suggested that regeneration schemes such as SRB encouraged a reliance on funding and agencies for engagement with communities were too top down in nature and the resources were spread too thinly over too many neighbourhoods to have any substantive impact (interviews 08.02.11 & 01.02.12). One project beneficiary of the SRB funding in Brightmet was a food-growing scheme on a piece of empty land between some houses on Red Lane. Despite the best of intentions, the scheme failed to sustain the

engagement of local residents and the site remained derelict until 2010, when the NMT decided to make it a focus of engagement activity once more.

As well as the lack of sustainability from the few SRB funded projects in Brightmet, Bolton Community College stopped funding work in Brightmet so The Art House and New Lane Residents Centre shut in 2005. The New Lane Housing Office also closed, so the relationships created by the Community Housing Officers were not sustained and the laundrette closed down. Residents were, therefore left to carry on community-based activities without the finances, premises or committed support from agencies. This was much to the frustration of one ex-Brightmet practitioner who found that the projects set up and nurtured dwindled to nothing after agencies left the neighbourhood.

You can't support people to start something and then walk away and leave them to it (Former practitioner interview 22.11.11).

4.1.2 Impact of current engagement on residents

When I interviewed Brightmet residents for the UCAN Review, they talked about the positive impact that engaging with the NMT and UCAN staff had on their lives. Findings from the UCAN Review Users Evaluation report (Fox 2010a) demonstrated that many users engaged with the UCAN because of friendly staff and a safe, happy, relaxed environment. This had enabled them to find out about the different services and support available and consider accessing them when the time was right for them. Residents spoke about how the engaging with the UCAN centre had increased their confidence and as a result led them to access unemployment support and financial advice.

Fred has been unemployed for 5 years, has problems with drink, drugs and depression and is estranged from his children. It was when he was walking past the local shops when staff undertaking a consultation told him about the UCAN. Eight months later, Fred remains positive about the staff and activities at the UCAN,

It's made a big impression on my life....I were downhill, bad on beer at one point so coming here ...it's helped me a lot cos it's made me feel a lot better, it's made me feel 10 times better for myself. They [UCAN staff] are the kind of people here who are here to help you. They are all good people and they are easy to talk to, it's not like they've got an aggressive attitude, as soon as you walk in you are always welcomed with a smile (Brightmet UCAN user interview 25.08.2010).

Sue had worked for the same employer for 30 years before being made redundant. Although she had lived in Brightmet a number of years, she felt very isolated as she did not socialise in the area and could not rely on anyone local for support, “I were [sic] devastated, absolutely devastated ... it was like my whole life fell apart” (Brightmet UCAN user 22.08.2010). Sue found out about the Brightmet UCAN from a leaflet in the Job Centre and came in to see what the centre had to offer. One of the staff introduced Sue to a Bolton Council colleague who referred her onto a workshop for interviews and confidence building and to get appointments to discuss CVs and job searching. Sue decided that she wanted to change career to work in health and social care but she was concerned about her lack of qualifications. She signed up to do Literacy and Numeracy courses through Bolton Wise employment support and Learn Direct. After a couple of months getting back on her feet with the help of UCAN staff and partner agencies, Sue began applying for jobs. I hear that a few days after speaking to me about her experience of the UCAN, she had been offered a job and had sent a thank you card to UCAN staff.

4.1.3 Lack of community capacity and recruiting residents to the research

As shown in the earlier section, during the late 1990s and early 2000s, there was a certain amount of engagement activity taking place with support from Bolton Council and Bolton College, led by a couple of key individuals in Brightmet. The danger of relying heavily on a couple of individuals to undertake engagement work was highlighted in section 2.4. Skidmore *et al.* (2006) talked about the likelihood of volunteers experiencing burn out as the pressure to take on more work and represent the interests of the community in different forums would increase. When conducting the Pre-Step stage of the Inquiry Stream, I discovered there were only a few community groups in Brightmet before the Neighbourhood Management Team (NMT) arrived. These were TOB Together, three Brightmet Football Clubs, Leverhulme Residents Association, and Deepdale Residents Association.

TOB Together is a local community group was initially supported by another housing association who wanted to consult with residents about a re-development of Greenroyd Avenue where one half of the street was to be demolished and new houses built. The group uses the UCAN Centre for meetings and has developed good working relationships with the NMT. The group worked with the UCAN Centre and Bolton Community Voluntary Service to set up a very successful ‘Tea and Toast’ weekly get together in the back room of the local pub. All people are welcome (including children) and it is regularly attended by approximately 20 people. TOB Together were invited to visit other

community groups in action to get inspired, develop ideas for demonstrations and guest speakers and consider organisational aspects. TOB intends to make 'Tea and Toast' and a new Wednesday Bingo night self-sufficient in the future.

I had the opportunity to meet with TOB on a number of occasions and found that a couple of the steering group had family caring responsibilities, ill health, family issues and were also involved with other activities, such as being a School Governor. One group member spoke about the anxiety she felt to not let anyone down, but, given the demands on her time as well as her health issues and caring responsibilities this was proving challenging for her. The group receives a lot of support from the NMT in finding and applying for funding and seeks guidance regarding matters of health and safety and legal requirements when putting on events. One committee member said,

If we didn't have a UCAN we'd be stuffed really. If we come up against a problem it's like we'll go and see [staff] at the UCAN and they show a way round of helping us... anything we don't know ourselves, we can go and ask. If the UCAN wasn't there as back up, we'd sort of go along blindly and get into a lot of trouble (Brightmet UCAN user 23.08.2010).

The Neighbourhood Management Team (NMT) also spoke to me about the amount of support needed by TOB Together to continue week to week. The group required assistance with finances, organising meetings and taking minutes, creating a logo and vision for the group, recruiting new members, and developing community activities for a wide range of local people. The team recognised that, despite a willingness and commitment to be involved, most existing volunteers in Brightmet lacked the capacity and skills needed to run a self-sustaining group and required a lot of hand-holding and continual presence from at least one team member, to work towards what the group wanted. This led me to conclude that the everyday issues people had in their lives were massively impacting on their ability and capacity to engage with the NMT and other agencies, and this had implications in terms of what I could expect from people I wished to invite to take part in the research. Therefore, I wanted to ensure that the research process was not a burden on those residents already engaged with groups. But also not to add to the workload of the NMT, who were balancing the difficult task of developing the capacity of local groups, and simultaneously encouraging self-reliance and independence to flourish.

When inviting people to interview as part of the data collection for the UCAN Review (Fox 2010a-e), there were two significant aspects that had methodological relevance for the Residents' Inquiry Stream. Some regular users of the UCAN centre were very reluctant to be involved with interviews for the UCAN Review. This was despite me being introduced by a NMT member. In one instance, a lady agreed to meet with me on a specific date and time and did not show up. During a discussion with the NMT, I speculated that this was because UCAN users did not know me sufficiently well enough to be involved, or had other commitments to attend to. I also wondered if the resident may have been unsure what their contribution would be and be fearful that it could be intrusive. This made me a little apprehensive about aiming to create a highly participative action research process with a group of residents because if 'engaged' residents were not interested in participating in the research (and without explaining why), then those people living in Brightmet who did not have an existing association with Bolton at Home may be even more difficult to connect with.

4.1.4 Ethical and emotional issues

When I invited users of a UCAN centre in another part of Bolton to speak to me about their experiences of the UCAN centre for the evaluation (Fox 2010a), I identified ethical and emotional issues relevant to the research. For the purposes of the evaluation of the centres, UCAN staff provided me with a list of UCAN users they thought would be happy to talk to me about the impact the centre had on their lives. In one instance, I phoned a man who had been a UCAN user to invite him to interview. Within a matter of seconds of the start of the conversation, it became apparent that he was experiencing severe mental distress which he attributed to recent unemployment, family pressures and concerns about money. He spoke freely to me, without any prompting, about the suicidal thoughts he had been having and how he was using alcohol to try and cope with his unhappiness. Fortunately, I was aware that the UCAN centre in his area had a free counselling service, so asked if he wanted to come in and share his concerns with someone qualified and able to help. I met him at the UCAN centre and introduced him to the counsellor who conducted a session with him and signposted him to other agencies who could support him.

I was deeply affected by the experience and reflected upon this when I interviewed the counsellor for the UCAN review a couple of days later. We discussed the emotional effect that community work in deprived areas can have on professionals and the boundaries and support that need to be in place for practitioners, including me as a researcher, to deal with unexpected and distressing situations. This made me realise that if I were to learn more

about the lived experience of local people in Breightmet, I needed to prepare for the possibility of people sharing some very difficult and challenging aspects of their lives and the impact this would have on me emotionally. I also recognised that engaging with local people was not something I could do without the involvement of the NMT as trained and experienced practitioners, with their knowledge of other services that could refer people on when required.

4.1.5 Summary of Pre-Step findings

I concluded from the Pre-Step that past regeneration initiatives and community work by professionals in the neighbourhood did achieve some success in engaging residents, mainly families. But this engagement was not sustained because funding was stopped and staff relocated to other areas. Since 2009, the NMT had been in the process of developing relationships with the few community groups in Breightmet, although the volunteers required a substantial amount of support and capacity building to maintain basic group functions (accounting for group finances, holding meetings and deciding the aims and activities).

Users engaged with the UCAN because of the friendly staff and because it was a safe, happy, relaxed environment. Residents spoke about how the engaging with the NMT and the UCAN centre had a significant impact for them in terms of increased confidence, employment opportunities, financial advice and support and developing group activities. Engagement was relatively small scale, working closely with individuals who accessed the UCAN over a period of time on a number of complex and interrelated issues.

With the learning gained from inviting people to interview as part of the UCAN Review (2010a-e) and the team's experience of a lack of local response to engagement activity, it was likely that residents were distrustful of service providers. I remained enthusiastic about establishing a PAR process with input from residents at all stages of the research. However, the level of need and lack of skills and resources of people already engaged with the NMT indicated that recruiting residents to the Inquiry Stream would be difficult and something I could not do without the team's full support.

4.2 Constructing and Creating the Inquiry

When constructing the inquiry, I hoped that the methods I identified in consultation with the NMT would create a participative action research process with a group of residents and enable them to be heavily involved and take ownership of all aspects of the Inquiry Stream. I was interested in creating a residents' focus group (Genat 2009) with local people to collectively discuss their lived experience, reflect on it and make plans for future action, section 3.4. I also wanted to feed the knowledge generated by the findings from residents into the other inquiry streams to develop an over-arching community engagement strategy and practice for Bolton at Home. Given the learning from the Pre-Step, I choose the following areas to explore within the Residents' Inquiry Stream:

1. Explore residents' views of Brightmet, the needs and issues and see if they support the findings articulated during the Pre-Step;
2. Examine residents' views on their relationship with Bolton at Home and other service providers, and what their motivations are for those who do engage. Also identify barriers to accessing services and engaging with the NMT and partners, especially for those residents who are not currently involved.

4.3 Planning and Taking Action

I was strongly influenced during the planning and taking action stage by Ledwith and Springett's (2010) Participatory Practice. This book discusses the importance of dialogue and becoming critical within participatory research and community development work and how "everyone has the capacity to understand the world differently and express their view as constructed by experience" (Ledwith and Springett 2010: 139). As discussed in section 2.6.4 about research with and in, communities, it was vital that I attempted to develop participatory processes where residents were valued for their views and individual contribution to the inquiry. Within such a dialogical space, the following aspects need to emerge:

- *Genuine empathic listening and suspending judgement;*
- *Respect for all participants' safety;*
- *Sincerity and curiosity;*
- *Disclosure of assumptions* (Ledwith and Springett (2010: 139).

I wanted to find out what individual local Brightmet residents were concerned about, what made them happy and the issues that were having the most impact on their lives as, “these emotions are the key to the motivation to act” Ledwith (2011: 38). Ledwith (2011) highlights the need to draw out the collective concerns of people living in a neighbourhood and also to determine how confident and efficacious residents feel collectively. A powerful intention for the taking action stage was about ‘listening from the heart’ where:

The act of listening of giving people your full attention is empowering in itself. It takes people’s experience seriously, creating a respectful and dignified experience (Ledwith 2011: 38-9).

In order to work with residents and ‘listen from the heart’, I decided to meet with residents, walk about the estate and speak to local people who were engaged with the NMT activities to ask them what they think of the area and talk about their experiences of living in Brightmet. There were two main strategies I decided to focus on in order to meet people, seek to understand the resident perspective of engagement and invite them to be involved with the research more fully as part of a residents’ focus group:

1. Informal conversations with residents;
2. Door knocking and interviews

The majority of informal conversations took place in 2010 and 2011 and with people I met through NMT team engagement activity such as the Photographer in Residence project, local residents associations, meetings I attended and ad hoc opportunities to speak to people from across the North Brightmet area. I conducted interviews with residents who were keen to undertake engagement activity with Bolton at Home and one resident who was heavily involved in past regeneration activity. I undertook the door knocking in October 2011 with two different members of the Neighbourhood Management Team in Top’ O’ Th’ Brow.

4.3.1 Informal conversations with residents

I wanted to speak informally to residents when people visited the UCAN centre and to those who were involved in other NMT organised activities. I anticipated that being based in the area nearly full time would enable ad hoc opportunities to talk to people outside shops, at bus stops and in the local pub. I hoped that conducting ‘walkabouts’ in the neighbourhood with local residents would allow me to better understand the area from their point of view.

I was concerned that because community engagement could be considered a policy makers' construct or a concept that made sense for practitioners but not residents, there may have been little benefit in asking residents directly about their understanding and hopes for engagement in regeneration. I wanted to ensure that discussions with local people were informal and did not sound official or rely on jargon. Initial conversations with residents in the Pre-Step revealed that many people were unfamiliar with community engagement as a concept and did not find it applicable to them, despite being engaged through the UCAN centres. I decided it would be best to not use the terms community engagement and neighbourhood management in subsequent conversations or interviews with local people.

I spoke to a member of a residents association, three residents involved with community work as professionals in the area, and one who was involved with past regeneration in the area, and two members of TOB Together. I also went on a tour of the neighbourhood one evening with a local resident. All of the residents I spoke to were already involved in Bolton at Home activity in one way or another but did provide their opinions on why other local people may be reluctant to engage and what service providers could do to improve their practice. Although happy to speak to me, the interviewees did not wish to be further involved with the research, as many did not want to be a part of a longer term research process nor had the time available to meet again.

4.3.2 Door knocking and interviews

In order to gather residents' views on their relationship with Bolton at Home and other service providers, and create a residents' focus group, I needed to introduce myself to a number of residents, ask for their thoughts, explain the research and invite them to attend a workshop to begin the Participatory Action Research process. As previously discussed, it was a difficult challenge to actively encourage residents to be involved with the research and other activities. This was compounded by there being few public places to meet people and have the right conditions or environment for a confidential interview.

I held a meeting with the NMT about how I could develop an engagement approach with local residents, deciding upon interviews at a time to suit them, using door knocking to introduce myself and invite them to take part (workshop notes 11.10.11). We agreed that there was more chance of engaging with people by knocking on their doors than asking them to phone to arrange an interview or having a 'drop in' session in the UCAN or the Rocket pub. It was my intention that I would be able to identify issues of importance to

residents during these interviews, and test the viability of door knocking as a successful method of engagement and research (Davies 2008). In addition, if there was interest from participants, I was optimistic that this could be an opportunity to invite people to join a Participatory Action Research focus group.

The team suggested Top o' Th' Brow (TOB) as an ideal place to pilot door knocking to find out about engagement, as this had been an area where past regeneration initiatives had been developed and perished. I reflected upon the team model of engagement, the lessons learnt from the NMT and my literature review, to determine what might work best and how to manage people's expectations about the research process. I created a leaflet which was, deliberately, 'non-branded' to appear more informal, and rather than focused on my Bolton at Home involvement, I chose to instead draw attention to my role as a University student needing help. Also, rather than interview, I used the term 'chat' to not put people off. I bought a dedicated mobile phone so people could speak to me if required rather than use my personal mobile or office number. I included a photo to make it seem more personal and so that they would recognise me, and wanted to ensure that rather than another consultation, people felt they were doing me a favour by talking to me.



Plate 4 Door Knocking Leaflet

I created a timetable with a few members of the NMT who volunteered to help me distribute leaflets, and then go back a couple of days later to door knock on a couple of streets in the TOB area and see if any of the residents were interested in speaking to me. During the planning session, the team and I agreed that, for safety, I would need to have a member of the NMT with me when conducting interviews in people's homes.

This did however affect when I could door knock i.e. when the NMT worked (only 9-5 weekdays) and needed to fit round the very busy schedules of team members so I was not able to assess whether evenings or weekends would result in a different response. We agreed to door knock from mid-morning onwards, based on their experience, the team thought that many people may still be in bed if we went round earlier.

During the interviews, I anticipated that responses would inform the community mapping about people's experience of living in Breightmet, what they considered to be important to them and the most pressing issues and how these are being addressed or not. In consultation with the NMT, a 'follow up sheet' was created that was a simple way for the NMT member to identify something that could be addressed after the interview by the team or with another service provider. It was important for me, from an ethical perspective, that, if an issue was identified by the team member, we needed to seek permission from the interviewee to follow up on their behalf and pass on their details to relevant agencies who could help. The exception to this would be if a safeguarding issue such as the abuse of children or vulnerable or older people was suspected, the team member would need to report any concerns through the appropriate referral mechanisms to partner agencies.

The NMT and I decided on a two week period to undertake the leafleting and door knocking around the TOB area. A member of the NMT and I leafleted Glaisters Lane, around 30 properties in total, and then we went back a couple of days later. On the first session of door knocking, we were invited in by one woman, for an interview that lasted about 20 minutes, as her 2 year old son was crying and wanting to play and her partner viewed our presence with suspicion. In the same door knocking session, six people answered the door but were not enthusiastic about talking to me. These consisted of: a couple of people who said they did not live in the house, others who suggested we come back at another time, and a woman who did not appear to speak much English. I followed up at a later date with two people, one who seemed interested in talking to me but was ill, and the other was not in when we called round so I posted a message for them to contact me if they wished to meet.

For the second door knocking session, a different member of the NMT team and I leafleted 25 properties on Monks Lane. Whilst leafleting, a man called down from a window and asked what we were doing. Following our explanation of the door knocking and interviews, and that we were canvassing people for their views of the area, he said, "it needs a bomb dropping on it". When we door knocked in the area, at around 11am, we spoke to three people who said they would be interested in speaking to us another time, including one who said he would speak to us later that day. We managed to interview one

man who spoke to us for two hours. We resumed door knocking again at 2pm and called round to the people who said they would meet with us, but did not receive an answer. We were invited into the house of a couple who spoke to us at length about life in Breightmet. I found out afterwards from the team that the family had been perpetrators of a large amount of anti-social behaviour in the area and had created a lot of hostility in the street.

Overall, three interviews were conducted and, after each, I reflected about the process with the two members of the team for their reaction and recorded the discussion. Given the success rate of three interviews from leafleting and door knocking approximately 55 properties and people's reluctance to be more involved with the research, I realised that it would not be possible to develop a residents' focus group in the time available, so put the idea of conducting a true Participatory Action Research process to one side for this Inquiry Stream.

4.4 Observing and Reflecting

In this section I bring together the significant themes from both the informal conversations and door knocking interviews, all of which confirm my findings from the Pre-Step stage and my literature review. They are discussed under the following headings:

1. Perceptions of Breightmet;
2. 'A bruised community';
3. Residents' perceptions of service providers;
4. Engagement in Breightmet.

4.4.1 Perceptions of the area

Perceptions of Breightmet from residents, practitioners and neighbourhood survey results seemed to fall into two camps. The first reading of the area is that there is a very positive, solid sense of community in the area, a community spirit and a strong sense of neighbourhood identity. The Place Survey (2008) showed that despite the issues people experience in Breightmet, 71% of survey respondents (the highest figure in Bolton wards) are satisfied with their local area as a place to live. One resident I spoke to said that, as she was elderly, many people in the area looked out for her, ensuring that she had enough food in her cupboards, her garden was well maintained and repairing a broken window (Interview with resident 01.06.10).

The other polarised perception is that Brightmet is a place with a very poor reputation and violent, criminal and anti-social elements. A number of ex (and current) practitioners and members of the NMT think there is under-reporting of anti-social behaviour and crime to the authorities that has distorted official crime statistics in the area over a period of years. Furthermore, recent consultations and engagement with residents (Place Survey 2008; NMT Bus Consultation 2010 discussed in NMT member interview 14.09.11) echoed past reports such as Brightmet Community Enterprise Business Plan (1998). These suggested that people in Brightmet think the police and other local public services have not successfully dealt with the issues in their local area and that parents do not take enough responsibility for the behaviour of their children. Conversations I had with local people also highlighted similar concerns that residents raised in consultations from the late 1990s. These centred on children and young people causing anti-social behaviour in the neighbourhood. This anti-social behaviour was said to take the form of noise nuisance, drinking and drug taking, fighting, vandalism and aggressive and abusive behaviour outside shops and in the street. People I spoke to echoed these findings and also highlighted a lack of activities targeted at this age group to raise aspirations and to divert young people away from criminal behaviour and into employment or training. Although one resident commented on how there was less crime than a year ago, all conversations and interviews referred to issues that are frequently found in deprived areas, such as anti-social behaviour and drugs. I found from conversations and interviews with residents in various geographical areas in Brightmet that they had similar concerns.

Anti-social behaviour is the main problem. The police are only interested in naming dealers. People go up the hill to get drugs, and, then are left to rot on benefits while their kids are running around causing havoc (Resident of Darcy Lever conversation 01.06.2010).

I don't feel safe going outside at night as there are gangs of youths hanging around and causing trouble, but I've lived in Brightmet all my life and wouldn't leave (Resident Greenroyd Avenue conversation 16.02.11).

4.4.2 'A bruised community'

As discussed in section 2.6.1, the poor reputation of a deprived area can have a profound impact on the residents. During the Pre-Step, one of the NMT remarked that residents do not say they live in Brightmet because of the reputation and that the negative perception seems hard to shake (NMT interview 11.01.11). An important point raised in section 2.5, was that many residents in deprived neighbourhoods were distrustful of public agencies, due to the failure of regeneration initiatives to create a lasting legacy and tackle the deep rooted economic and social problems in neighbourhoods. Findings supported the

sentiment that “from the residents’ point of view, wave after wave of regeneration initiatives represents a ‘norm’ of both instability and predictability” (Diamond and Liddle 2001: 7). I found that some residents attribute the lack of resident engagement with the NMT and other service providers in Brightmet as a direct consequence of disaffection grown out of failed regeneration projects over the past 20 years.

You need to recognise that you are dealing with a bruised community and they feel let down after funding for community education was pulled away and there has been nothing since 2000 to replace activity (Resident Greenroyd Avenue conversation 25.05.10).

Despite acknowledging the challenges that exist for people living in Brightmet, all but one of the residents I spoke to had very strong connection to the particular part of Brightmet in which they lived as well as family links across the neighbourhood. For some this was said to be the only and deciding reason to stay in the area. This supports an earlier theme identified in the Pre-Step by the Neighbourhood Management Team about the strength of community spirit and existing social capital.

People here have a strong sense of identity and people have lived here for generations – very close knit. People are tied to family, not geography. This area gets under your skin (Resident of Greenroyd Avenue conversation 25.05.10).

4.4.3 Residents’ perceptions of service providers

There were a number of important aspects that emerged from the data collection with regard to residents’ perceptions of service providers. One theme to emerge from the interviews and informal discussion was the perception of the police. One resident talked about how no one in Brightmet reports suspected criminal activity to the police as “one snitch had his house torched and windows smashed” (Brightmet resident 14.03.11). Instead, people in the neighbourhood were said to “look after their own”, meaning if someone had mugged you for example, you would be able to find out through connections in the area who it was and potentially mete out a suitable punishment. This supports a sense that the NMT had about under reporting crime in Brightmet and mistrust and suspicion of the police.

Many Bolton at Home tenants were dissatisfied with the housing service received, particularly with regard to repairs such as sorting out a damp problem in a child’s bedroom, issues with a boiler and fencing, as well as taking action on anti-social behaviour and quality of their local environment. One resident said that they felt Bolton at Home

housing staff were ‘jobsworths’ who lacked sympathy and understanding. I asked one resident why they are involved in a local residents association and they said,

Because of all the trials and tribulations I have experienced, although I am still banging my head against a brick wall. Brightmet has been left as a sink estate, any people with problems are sent here (Darcy Lever resident conversation 01.06.2010).

The majority of people I spoke to were aware of the UCAN centre but not that it was staffed by Bolton at Home employees. They spoke of staff by name and remarked on how friendly and approachable the team had been and the type of service or support they had accessed. Residents either went into the UCAN out of curiosity when they were passing to go to the shop or heard about what it offered from friends and family. For one resident, there was a real separation between members of the NMT she knew and other Bolton at Home staff they had come in contact with. This relates to NMT comments about the Customer Involvement Team and the Consumerist and Participatory Framework described later in section 6.4.2.

The Community Development Officer is the only person I can feel can trust and relate to. The Customer Involvement staff are patronising and tell you stuff you already know, people with job descriptions that don't mean anything. They only want to deal with people in an organised fashion – a lunch, a PowerPoint (Darcy Lever resident conversation 01.06.2010).

During the Pre-Step, I interviewed an ex-Brightmet practitioner and they said that there was not enough trust and belief from local people in the 2000s that anything would happen in the area by service providers and regeneration initiatives (interview 08.02.11). My findings from the conversations and interviews with residents confirmed that trust was fundamentally important for local people in their relationship with service providers. Given the feeling from some of being let down by past regeneration initiatives and current lack of response by agencies to concerns raised about the effective management of their homes and community safety, many residents were distrustful of engaging with service providers. One resident gave me this advice for engaging with local people in the area.

It takes a long time to win people's friendship; they are not very trusting of outsiders due to bad experiences. You need to be gentle and persistent (Greenroyd Avenue resident conversation 25.05.10).

4.4.4 Engagement in Brightmet

Even though I was conscious of not applying any pressure or making people feel obligated, I found that when knocking on people's doors with one of the NMT, many residents did not say no outright to being interviewed but agreed that I come back another time. This was similar to the experience I had when recruiting users to the interviews for the UCAN Centre Internal Review outlined in the Pre-Step. This was also an occurrence noted by some of the NMT when residents would say yes to being involved in a project, event or activity and then not turn up without providing a reason. One resident called it

The Brightmet Puzzle - when people say they will come and don't (Conversation with resident 22.06.10).

I noticed that there was confusion amongst residents about the different roles and responsibilities of Bolton Council and Bolton at Home. As the social landlord, Bolton at Home owns and maintains the tenants' properties but also oversees the general upkeep and environmental quality of the estate. However, the council are responsible for delivering environmental services, such as fly tipping, recycling and bin collections. This meant that residents were unsure who to contact regarding different issues and, during interviews they used 'the council' and 'Bolton at Home' interchangeably.

A couple of residents suggested service providers need to evaluate what is being offered to local people and ensure it is relevant to them. Engagement needs to be unstructured and informal and should be up to the community whether they want to engage (Greenroyd Avenue resident interview 25.05.10). In Inquiry Stream 3, the NMT talked about how residents "have such low opinions of themselves" (NMT interview 09.01.12) and that people need a lot of support to build their confidence and self-belief. This was confirmed by residents I spoke to and illustrated by these comments:

People don't think they can do something, worried about being knocked back, they are told by so many people they amount to nothing (Resident interview 6.10.11).

I don't want my daughter to throw her life away like I did (TOB resident interview 21.10.11).

4.4.5 Use of door knocking as a way of engaging

Door knocking as a mode for engagement is extremely time-consuming and resource-intensive for staff that does not translate into a high response rate but it can produce some valuable insight and provide useful introductions. Findings suggest that in Brightmet, door knocking could be said to be a moderately successful approach to reach out to residents in an informal conversational way. However, using door knocking as a data collection method is not in itself, sufficient to engage with local people. This also reinforces conclusions from earlier studies about the importance of practitioners developing a local presence, capturing people's interest and focusing on positive activity.

4.5 Implications for engagement practice

Although there are numerous challenges within Brightmet, it could be argued that the lived experience of residents is not very different from other poor areas, however, the 'Brightmet puzzle' may indicate that the lack of community groups and failures of past engagement in services and regeneration create more difficult circumstances in which practitioners are trying to engage. There are a number of implications for engagement practice that connect with Inquiry Stream 3: Developing Engagement Practice with the NMT. These are:

1. Importance of family and social networks;
2. Trust in service providers;
3. Challenging stigma.

4.5.1 Importance of family and social networks

As noted by Dean and Hastings (2000) residents can have very different views of a neighbourhood and these affect the likelihood of whether they will leave or stay in the area. This typology of attachment and identity has been helpful in analysing why residents in Brightmet feel how they do towards the neighbourhood in which they live. The important aspects for residents are about improving the quality of life for their children, enhancing family links and being proud of the area where they live and these are key drivers for engagement activity of which the NMT needed to be aware (6.5.2).

4.5.2 Trust in service providers

Another significant finding from this Inquiry Stream was regarding service providers getting the basics right in responding to complaints, being open and honest and delivering a high quality service. Agencies showing residents that they are interested in their problems and doing what they say they are going to do by delivering on promises was strongly emphasised in a number of interviews as necessary to build trust. This was seen as the first step to engagement; that service providers are responsive to the concerns of local people and can be seen to be acting accordingly. The importance of a sense of efficacy from local people and a belief that accessing a service or phoning up the council or Bolton at Home will result in positive change was highlighted in the findings. The lack of confidence and self-belief could be one of the biggest barriers to developing engagement in Breightmet.

4.5.3 Challenging stigma

If practitioners in Breightmet address the most pressing issues of concern for residents such as anti-social behaviour and crime and lack of activities for young people it will demonstrate that action is being taken on the things that matter to them. Practitioners could undertake work to challenge the stigma and negative reputation of Breightmet through highlighting positive aspects of the area and the people who live in it. By harnessing the positive aspects of Breightmet and the sense of attachment, and close family and social ties that residents have, practitioners may find it easier to build relationships with local people and groups.

4.6 Summary of Inquiry Stream 1 Findings

The findings from this chapter about the Residents' Lived Experience have implications for developing transformative community engagement practice and strategy. Breightmet residents were struggling with similar complex and serious issues as identified in the 1990s and 2000s surveys, as shown in the Pre-Step. These include unemployment, anti-social behaviour, drugs and vandalism. However, many residents I spoke to are fiercely protective of the neighbourhood and fellow residents and family connections and the NMT commented on the sense of community that exists. Described as a 'bruised community' by one resident, others confirmed feeling distrustful of agencies, who were accused of failing to respond to concerns and not providing basic services. One theme from the Taking Action stage showed the poor relationship between local people and the police and the belief that, if a resident reported an issue, they would be seen as a 'snitch'.

For some residents, there was a clear sense of separation between housing staff and the Customer Involvement Team of Bolton at Home and the Neighbourhood Management Team and the work done in the UCAN. As shown in the UCAN Review report (Fox 2010a) and also during interviews, residents were very positive about the NMT's friendly approach and willingness to help. Brightmet was said to be an area where people did not have much confidence and had low levels of wellbeing. This, and a lack of trust in service providers, legacy of past regeneration and few people who do engage, may explain the 'Brightmet Puzzle', a phrase used by one resident to explain how people say they will attend a meeting, event or activity then fail to turn up on the day. Implications for practice were identified including informal engagement approaches to build trust and delivering responsive services to address the issues of most concern to residents. It is important to challenge stigma and negative perceptions of the area, develop activities that appeal to families and the improvement of low levels of confidence and wellbeing should be a top priority for practitioners undertaking engagement.

The Inquiry Stream has produced some implications for engagement for practitioners in Brightmet that relate to the NMT inquiry. These focused on the need to build trust, create more responsive services and develop relationships to strengthen family connections and community links. Practitioners should address the most pressing issues of concern for people to show that action is being taken on what matters to them. Furthermore an enabling and informal approach that encourages residents to connect with others, feel more confident, and improve their wellbeing was considered the best way to engage with residents who had been bruised by past regeneration activity and were distrustful of service providers. In addition, practitioners need to undertake work to challenge the stigma and negative reputation of poorer neighbourhoods and create a more positive perception of the area from those who live in it and in surrounding areas.

4.7 Inquiry Stream 1 Reflection

This Inquiry Stream provided much learning about the challenges associated with participatory action research within a community setting. The action research stages I created involved local people in Brightmet but not to the extent I originally intended where they would be taking ownership of all aspects and driving the process. It became clear, early on, that there were a number of reasons as to why residents would not participate in a residents' focus group. This was due to a lack of interest, time or resources, or not being in a suitable place, psychologically or geographically, to be involved in this way.

As the Industrial Doctoral Scheme project I was working on had been sponsored, initiated and overseen by Bolton at Home, I realised that conducting a true PAR study was very challenging, if not impossible. Instead, I adopted a more conventional way of undertaking research by gathering data through conversation and interviews. The level of difficulty I experienced in engaging with residents allowed me to better empathise with the NMT (who had substantially more experience than me) about the issues when trying to develop relationships with local people. Considering working with disabled people, Ottmann, Laragy and Damonze (2009) say that it is important researchers, when undertaking PAR, recognise that participation is:

not a given and community development, group support and capacity building as well as risk management and succession planning proved to be vital (Ottmann et al. 2009: 43).

Another significant aspect in this Inquiry Stream was the issues regarding access, my role, positioning and identity. I debated whether I should appear to be a neutral party to residents, and create distance from the NMT or Bolton at Home in order to suggest a degree of independence and lack of influence on the research, and so people could talk more freely. When interviewing people in the door knocking data collection, I was worried that because there was a member of the team present, the resident would self-censor or choose to be more selective about what they said. I also reflected about how to present myself to people without giving them an incorrect impression that I could solve any of the problems they shared with me and how they would view me as an ‘outsider’ asking questions. When drinking and playing pool in a local Brightmet pub one evening with a friend, I was asked by one local if I was a social worker. This alarmed me as I am aware from experience of living in Salford, that social workers can have a bad reputation in poorer areas. They may be associated with taking children into care and I was concerned that if people had this initial impression, it may prevent them from talking to me.

I reflected upon the use of door knocking as a method of engaging residents to canvas opinion and develop opportunities for further discussion. Whilst undertaking the Pre-Step and having discussions with practitioners, I wondered if people in Brightmet, or indeed, any deprived area would respond in a different way to engagement activity than people living in a more affluent neighbourhood. When I reflected upon what I might do if a service provider or researcher sought to engage with me by: telephone, leaflet or door knocked for an interview, I decided I would not be very enthusiastic about interacting with a service provider in this way. I raised this question with some senior managers during interviews in Inquiry Stream 3 about how they would respond to these types of

engagement methods and most agreed they would behave in a similar way to me. This shows to me that these mechanisms do not produce the required call to action that agencies are looking for on their own. The necessity for a more holistic engagement approach formed the basis of discussions with the NMT about their concept of community engagement practice (Chapter 6).

During the door knocking interviews, I wondered afterwards if I should have asked more personal questions relating to work, money and family life but I was not sure it was appropriate especially when others were present and it may have been seen as intrusive on a first meeting. When conducting interviews in someone's home, unavoidable things occurred that affected the quality and flow of the interview such as children demanding attention! On two occasions, other members of the family started to chip in with their thoughts so I had to make a decision to let them continue and encourage their contribution or ask them to stop so a consent form could be completed before they became any further involved. I found interviewing with someone else quite challenging, as on occasion, the team member would make suggestions, interrupt or voice their opinion and this changed the dynamic of the conversation and made the research participant less forthcoming.

I found the tone of most conversations and door knocking quite negative and am unsure whether this was because I focused on the less appealing aspects of people's lived experience or that the residents were not very positive in response to the questions. I was also a little naive to think that a group of people living in the same street would be friends and get on well and, had I been successful in inviting people to attend a focus group would have been unprepared for the level of conflict that could have manifested. Instead of concluding that the lack of response to the door knocking was something of an engagement failure, I realised was extremely fortunate that some residents in Brightmet did answer the door (albeit in low numbers). On reflection, it was very generous of these people to invite someone they did not know into their homes and talk openly about their views and experiences.

4.8 Inquiry Stream 1 Summary

This chapter presented Inquiry Stream 1: Residents' Lived Experience and provided findings from residents of Breightmet about their views of living in the area and service providers, fulfilling Research Objective 1. This chapter has emphasised the Breightmet resident perspective and context when exploring the development of community engagement for sustainable regeneration. It has highlighted the 'Breightmet Puzzle' and examined the important implications for community engagement practice. It has also produced learning about capturing the resident voice in action research, and an attempt to enact a Participatory Action Research process in a community setting to explore residents' lived experience, views of the area and perceptions about engagement and service delivery.

The next chapter illustrates the process and outcome of Inquiry Stream 2 (Chapter 5) Development of Community Engagement Strategy with Bolton at Home senior managers.

Chapter 5: Inquiry Stream 2 - Development of Community Engagement Strategy with senior managers

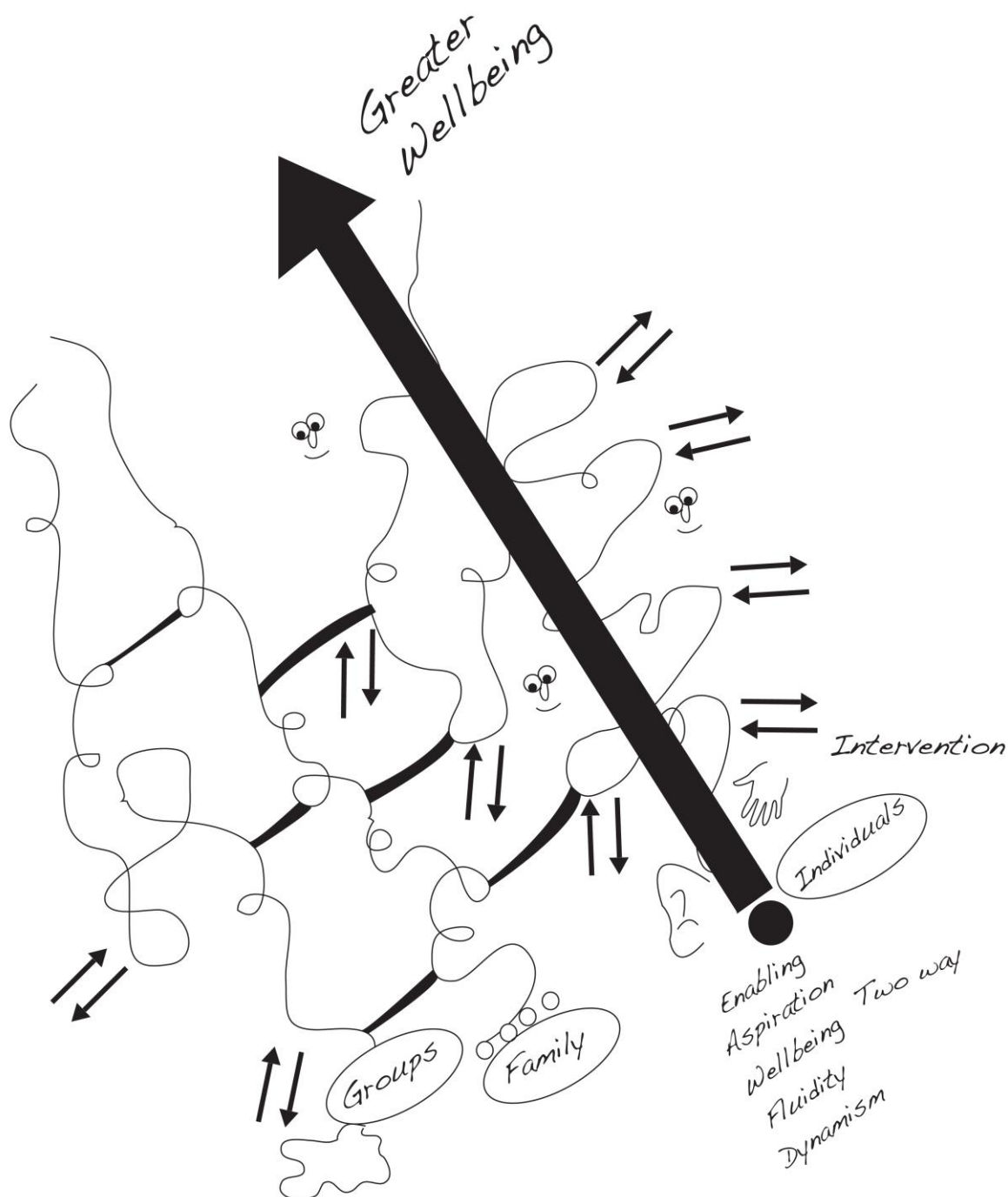


Figure 14 Example of senior manager concept map of community engagement

The aim of community engagement according to this concept map by a Bolton at Home senior manager (Figure 14) is the achievement of wellbeing and happiness for individuals, families and groups. According to the manager, the role of Bolton at Home is to provide a helping hand, listening ear, aspirational thinking and effective interventions that work to suit the individual and provide links to the wider community. Engagement is a two way process that is enabling, fluid and dynamic.

Introduction

This chapter explores the development of Community Engagement Strategy for Bolton at Home and discusses the work undertaken with senior managers in Inquiry Stream 2 to understand the role of housing associations in regeneration and the nature of community engagement. The aim of the Inquiry Stream was to examine the varied conceptions of community engagement that existed across Bolton at Home and to assist with the development of the organisation's community engagement strategy. Through critical examination of senior managers' perspectives of engagement in regeneration, I created spaces for discussion with staff to reflect upon the relationships between Bolton at Home and tenants, residents, and partners. The activities as part of the action research cycle for this Inquiry Stream and the chapter plan are shown in Table 5.

Inquiry Stream	Pre-Step stage	Constructing & creating the inquiry	Planning & taking action	Observing & reflecting
Inquiry Stream 2: Development of Community Engagement Strategy (Senior managers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff interviews & focus groups for UCAN Review • Audit of Bolton at Home engagement • Document analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is community engagement to senior managers and why do it? • What is the role of Bolton at Home in regeneration? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual manager interviews & mapping • Report produced of findings from interviews & mapping & questions for further discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement Strategy Framework created • Discussions held with senior managers about how findings can develop CE strategy & practice

Table 5 Inquiry Stream 2: Development of Community Engagement Strategy

This chapter shows how data collection and analysis led to the creation of a 'Consumerist and Participatory' Framework to analyse engagement at Bolton at Home and contribute to strategic thinking about community engagement. This framework addresses a gap in knowledge about the development of community engagement strategy of a housing association (gap 6) and this contribution to the literature is discussed in section 8.1.1. This Inquiry Stream fulfils the following research objectives:

- *Explore the strategic implications for Bolton at Home and other UK housing associations in seeking to engage the community in regeneration activities and projects (RO 4).*
- *Examine the extent to which the research has helped to develop organisational community engagement strategy and practice and enable the voices of residents to be heard (RO 5).*

Background to Bolton at Home

Despite the withdrawal of government funding for neighbourhood initiatives and cuts to public services discussed in the Introduction chapter, Bolton at Home remains committed to delivering holistic regeneration in disadvantaged areas, providing services in partnership with other agencies and engaging with local residents to improve their lives. This can be seen in the creation of the Urban Care and Neighbourhood (UCAN) Centres, investment into arts programmes to engage local people and taking a leading role in Private Sector Renewal programmes and new build developments. In 2005 Bolton at Home became a Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder, working as an equal partner with the local authority, to deliver regeneration in deprived areas to mainstream services and engaging the community. Bolton at Home is atypical in current times as a housing association that continues to work within, and lead on, a Neighbourhood Management model of neighbourhood regeneration and seeks to achieve social justice and equality (Thomson 2010).

5.1 Pre-Step

In the first instance, I needed to appreciate the context in which I was researching and also to ensure that the research was credible, collaborative and relevant to Bolton at Home and Brightmet. It was therefore important that I gained a better understanding of engagement practice across the organisation, by speaking with staff and analysing documents, action plans, strategies and relevant academic and practitioner literature. I focussed on the following ways to gather information and generate themes during the Pre-Step phase:

1. Discussions with Bolton at Home housing staff;
2. Observation and meetings with the Brightmet Neighbourhood Management Team;
3. Analysis of the Community Engagement Strategy;
4. The UCAN review.

5.1.1 Discussions with Bolton at Home housing staff

By attending staff training and conducting discussions with staff across the organisation, I was able to gain an insight into staff perception of customers, community engagement practice and the organisation's mission. I found that Bolton at Home staff were undertaking a wide range of different engagement activity. There was also uncertainty about the aim of community engagement and very little awareness of the Community Engagement Strategy (Bolton at Home 2010) across the organisation. Although Bolton at Home's commitment to being a Housing Regeneration organisation was strongly expressed, most frontline staff, particularly those who worked in the Housing Directorate,

were confused about the organisation's role in regeneration and how they were helping to deliver this. For example, in one training session I attended housing staff were extremely negative about local people and their needs and seemed to lack empathy and an understanding of the challenges faced by many Bolton at Home residents (field notes 19.08.10). Despite being assured by senior managers, of the significance of community engagement to the organisation, there appeared to be confusion from front-line staff (mainly housing) about the relevance to community engagement and regeneration to their work.

5.1.2 Observation and meetings with Neighbourhood Management Team

In my role as Knowledge Transfer Associate, I was based with the Neighbourhood Management Team (NMT) and, as such, attended and participated in team and project meetings. For the Pre-Step of Inquiries 2 and 3, I spoke, informally, with team members on an individual and collective basis, to pick up the important issues for them about engagement and to develop an understanding of their views. During meetings, I wrote detailed notes to keep a record of what was said, and reflected on this to identify key themes or areas to explore in future. I also used my reflective diary to articulate my assumptions, make sense of the team's engagement practice and reflect upon my role and involvement.

Of relevance to this Inquiry Stream, I found that the NMT were frustrated at the lack of response from local people in Brightmet to their engagement work and services and were unsure how their practice could be supported by the organisation and further developed. Bolton Metropolitan Council and other partners were reducing services at a local level which was affecting the ability of the NMT to coordinate a neighbourhood management approach to service delivery. This raised concern about the role of Bolton at Home in neighbourhood regeneration and the capacity of the NMT to commission and deliver services and engage in Brightmet. In addition, there was confusion about the overlap of the role and support provided to community groups and residents associations by the Bolton at Home Customer Involvement Officers (based centrally) and work done on a local level with the same groups by Community Development Officers based in Neighbourhood Management Teams. The Brightmet NMT acknowledged that at times they did not feel supported or understood by the rest of the organisation, especially by staff within the Housing directorate.

5.1.3 Analysis of Bolton at Home's Community Engagement Strategy

As discussed in section 2.2.1, Bolton at Home is atypical, as a housing association delivering regeneration through a Neighbourhood Management model. Also, of significant note, was the way in which Bolton at Home attempted to incorporate resident involvement, tenant participation and community development within one community engagement strategy concerned with all people living in neighbourhoods, not just tenants of the organisation (Bolton at Home 2010). However, by critically examining the Community Engagement Strategy, I concluded that Neighbourhood Management, UCANs and Community Development had not been given as much emphasis within the strategy as the more traditional customer engagement mechanisms, such as tenants and residents associations and tenant consultation. This may explain why engagement in the strategy described involvement that takes place within pre-existing structures, feeding directly into the work of the organisation, rather than a transformative engagement model practised by the NMT and articulated in Chapter 6.

5.1.4 UCAN Review

The Urban Care and Neighbourhood Centres (UCAN) review was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the UCANs, understand their role in the delivery of Neighbourhood Management and capture their impact on local communities in the borough. I contributed a number of reports I authored which basis for the overall UCAN Review Report (McNulty 2011) and I will discuss these in turn.

UCAN Users Qualitative Evaluation

The UCAN Users Qualitative Evaluation (Fox 2010a) presented a detailed account of the work of each centre - its service, projects and the context in which it is based and the impact of the UCAN on the individuals, groups and volunteers who use the centres. By visiting the centres, speaking to UCAN staff, collecting testimonials and interviewing users of the UCAN centres using a semi-structured approach, a case study of each centre was created. This provided an insight into the work of each centre and an opportunity to hear from local people about the difference the UCANs have made to them, in their own words. The data collected indicated that UCAN centres can have a significant impact on individual and groups with a wide range of different and related issues. The difficulties I experienced in Brightmet in encouraging residents to be involved with the research was highlighted in section 4.1.3.

UCAN Managers Report and UCAN Support Officers Report

Both of the UCAN Staff Reports; Managers (Fox 2010b) and Project Officers (Fox 2010c) are based on two separate focus groups; one with UCAN centre managers and one with UCAN support staff to gather their thoughts on their role, the work of the UCAN centres, working in partnership and challenges and opportunities in each of the local areas where they are based. The UCAN Managers report indicated that at times other partners struggle to engage effectively with local people or lack the capacity to engage at all (e.g. Job Centre Plus). UCAN Staff provided examples of some users' stories to illustrate the challenging yet rewarding work. UCAN staff also articulated that there was a general lack of interaction and close working between Bolton at Home housing staff and the UCAN Centres. UCAN staff suggested that other Bolton at Home colleagues had a limited understanding about the centres and role and responsibilities of UCAN and Neighbourhood Management staff. There was a false perception that people who worked in Neighbourhood Management teams "just sit around all day drinking tea and chatting" (Fox 2010c: 4).

Housing Office Staff Report

One of the UCAN centres was based in an old council building and shared by the local Bolton at Home Housing Office. For the Housing Office Staff Report (Fox 2010d), I interviewed housing staff for their thoughts on the UCAN, the relationship between them and UCAN staff, and the advantages and disadvantages of working in the same building. My report concluded that there was a significant cultural variation between the purpose, nature of work and roles of staff in the Housing Office, and the UCAN ethos and focus. Housing staff were unclear about the responsibilities of UCAN staff and how their role could contribute to improvements to the delivery of housing services. In addition, housing staff were confused about how closer working with UCAN staff could benefit the regeneration objectives of the neighbourhood. On the whole, interview participants presented mixed views about the relationship between the Housing Office and the UCAN and how and why engagement practice is conducted. This disconnect between housing staff and the NMT was recognised by the NMT in Inquiry Stream 3 and the implications for engagement practice suggested (sections 6.1.3, 6.4 and 6.7).

Housing Association UCAN Managers Report

Two of the UCAN centres were managed by two other different housing associations (Irwell Valley Housing Association and St Vincent's Housing Association) in partnership with Bolton at Home. By interviewing the Housing Association UCAN Managers, I was able to provide an account of their role and responsibilities, the local impact of the centres and the alignment between the work of the UCAN and their organisation's commitment to

regeneration (Fox 2010e). Findings showed the importance of partnership working to the service delivery both within and outside UCAN centres to achieve a neighbourhood management approach. High value was placed upon strategic links with Bolton Council and Bolton at Home and the managers suggested this emphasis on community investment was consistent and complementary with the work of their Housing Associations. The ‘target market’ for UCAN centres posed issues for St Vincents and Irwell Valley as they have a smaller concentration of tenants in properties around the UCAN centres than Bolton at Home. This has implications for the other housing associations about what benefit the centres are directly providing to their tenants, issues of funding, and promotion of the centres, and the necessity of keeping adequate records to monitor impact. Both managers stressed the importance of responding to local need regardless of housing tenure. A common theme emerged of needing to address unemployment and how social and community activities can bring people together.

5.1.5 Summary of Pre-Step findings

From the various activities with which I was involved during the pre-step stage outlined above, I was able to draw the following conclusions about community engagement practice at Bolton at Home.

- Engagement practice was seen by many operational staff as the responsibility of a minority of staff in the Regeneration Directorate in Bolton at Home;
- There were various types of engagement undertaken by Customer Involvement Team, UCAN staff, housing staff and partner organisations;
- Staff within Bolton at Home did not have a common understanding about the purpose and rationale of community engagement;
- Tension existed between staff who were engaging and delivering services just to tenants and those who were engaging with residents of any housing tenure in the wider neighbourhood;
- The practice of the Breightmet Neighbourhood Management Team was not adequately reflected in Bolton at Home’s Community Engagement Strategy.

I presented these findings to the Industrial Doctoral Scheme Research Project Team in November 2010. Following a discussion about how the inquiry could be developed, it was decided I would further explore the multiple perspectives regarding purpose, nature and outcome of engagement in the organisation. I hoped this would contribute to the development of Bolton at Home’s Community Engagement Strategy to reflect this variation and make suggestions about how practice could be further supported.

5.2 Constructing and Creating the Inquiry

The Pre-Step stage enabled me to identify and make sense of the issues, explore meaning of the topic under investigation with staff and inform the research. To show how the inquiry was constructed and created, I have brought together the earlier Pre-Step findings into Table 6.

Pre-Step findings	Inquiry Stream 2 Constructing
Impact of cuts to services is a big concern to staff as the capacity of partners to deliver services and engagement is diminished	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the role of Bolton at Home in neighbourhood regeneration? • Why does the organisation want to engage and with whom?
There is confusion amongst staff (mainly housing) about the purpose and type of engagement conducted by Neighbourhood Management Teams Parts of the organisation or partners are engaging in a different way and tension exists between these approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are senior managers' conceptions of community engagement? • Do senior managers recognise the tension that exists between staff with different roles? • How can the similarities and differences of staff views of engagement be articulated and framed in a positive way? • How do you measure success or impact from community engagement?
The NMT did not feel that their model of engagement practice is reflected in the Community Engagement Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can staff inform strategic decision making about engagement practice? • How can the community engagement strategy and practice be developed?

Table 6 Inquiry Stream 2: Synthesis of Pre-Step and constructing stages

As highlighted in section 3.6.2 and 3.10, a systems thinking approach can enable the uncovering of different viewpoints. It was important that the Inquiry Stream captured different perspectives from staff across Bolton at Home and by speaking to the senior management team and other managers, I wanted to explore if a consensus existed about community engagement in regeneration. If it was not possible to determine a similar view, then I hoped there would be value in articulating multiple perspectives and finding an overarching framework that could encompass all conceptions.

As identified in section 2.2.3, few studies discuss the development of community engagement strategy. However, Icarus (2005) acknowledges the various different organisational levels that need to be considered by developing a community engagement strategy. The report suggests there should be a multi-level approach to engagement that includes: Strategic/Board level, Organisation/management level, Operation/delivery and

Community. I became more aware of the significance of these levels as the inquiry developed and how tension can arise between them. Conflict may exist between personal and professional identities of staff, as well as the change agenda and values of the organisation (Handy 1999; Meyerson 2001) and I realised I needed to recognise the individual, role and team identities that staff have at Bolton at Home. When conducting my inquiry, I wanted to take into account the identity from which senior managers were speaking. This could be from a number of perspectives, in their role representing the organisation (member of senior management team), a professional position (e.g. Director of Housing Services), or when expressing a personal view. I was mindful, however, that senior managers may also speak from a combination of all three positions, interchangeably.

5.3 Planning and Taking Action

Originally the intention from the Industrial Doctoral Scheme (IDS) Project Group was that I should only interview senior staff based on the Regeneration Directorate. However as the construction phase developed, it became clear the views of managers from other Directorates and Chief Executive needed to be incorporated within the research. The following objectives for the Industrial Doctoral Scheme project were agreed by the IDS Project Team and provided focus to the planning and taking action stage of the research.

1. To enhance a collective understanding of what engagement means and how it should apply within a community;
2. To conceptualise the nature of community engagement, its purpose, actors, methods and outcomes;
3. To collect perspectives of senior managers about 'regeneration', 'neighbourhood management' and 'community engagement and empowerment';
4. To inform a revision of the Community Engagement Strategy.

During conversations with the IDS Project Group, it was agreed that findings from the interviews would be written up into a report and presented to the IDS Project Group and Community Engagement Manager who would use it to refresh the community engagement strategy. It was said my role was not to provide recommendations in the report as this fell outside my remit and needed to be done by Bolton at Home staff themselves. The IDS Project Group hoped that this work would raise awareness of community engagement across the organisation and ensure commitment to wider regeneration objectives of the organisation. The format for the interviews, including the concept mapping, are discussed below.

5.3.1 Interviews and concept mapping

Semi-structured interviews lasting from 45 minutes to nearly two hours were conducted between December 2010 and May 2011. The interview comprised a common set of questions (see Interview Schedule and Information Sheet Appendix 1 and 2) and further exploration of topics of interest as the interview progressed. I invited the following senior staff to interview:

Senior Management Team:

- Director of Regeneration;
- Director of Housing Services;
- Director of Technical Services;
- Director of Organisational Development;
- Director of Finance and Business Development (who declined to be interviewed);
- The Chief Executive;
- Assistant Director of Regeneration;
- Deputy Director of Housing Services;
- Community Engagement Manager;
- Knowledge and Information Team Manager;
- The Policy Manager;
- Brightmet Neighbourhood Management Team Manager.

Towards the end of the interviews, each manager was invited to draw their concept of engagement in regeneration based on the discussion. In some instances, the manager instructed the researcher to produce the drawing for them, indicating what needed to be done. As referenced in section 3.7.2, the use of conceptual mapping is an effective and expressive way for people to articulate their thoughts about abstract concepts and identify their mental models. The senior managers' concept maps are in Appendix 3 numbered 1-11 and referred to in the findings in later sections.

5.4 Observing and Reflecting

While writing the report of the interview findings and concept maps to disseminate to senior managers, I maintained the confidentiality of participants and sought to triangulate my findings with members of the Neighbourhood Management Team. This ensured my conclusions were applicable not only within a strategic context but made sense to operational staff. I met with the IDS Project Group (18.07.11) during the analysis and writing up stage to highlight some of the initial findings, clarify objectives of the report and what would happen as a result of the research. We discussed how the report would provide a stimulus for discussion across Bolton at Home and went beyond community engagement to consider the wider role of the organisation in regeneration.

The findings from the interviews and conceptual mapping are outlined in this section under the following headings:

1. Role of Bolton at Home;
2. Achieving sustainable regeneration;
3. Community engagement and service delivery;
4. Describing community engagement practice;
5. Conceptualising community engagement;
6. Engagement through Community Development, Arts and UCAN;
7. Consumerist and Participatory Framework;
8. Implications for Bolton at Home.

5.4.1 Role of Bolton at Home

The Senior Managers Findings Report (Fox 2012) showed that consensus existed at a managerial level about the values of the organisation and managers had a strong sense of purpose and commitment to Bolton at Home's mission. Managers shared a vision about the scope and intention of regeneration as a holistic intervention, not just investment in 'bricks and mortar' but of engaging with local people to develop skills, build confidence and get involved with others in the area. This theme of working with residents, rather than doing regeneration 'at' people is reflected in Bolton at Home's Regeneration Strategy (Thomson 2010). Interview findings showed that there was a passionate and deeply held view that the organisation has a responsibility to people in Bolton to improve their quality of life and local area, not just to undertake projects that have a business case to support Bolton at Home's financial viability.

I think there is genuinely a belief in the values of the organisation as being community driven and really informed by a belief in customers and communities and regeneration principles and ideals. Regeneration is part of our DNA, rather than just stuff we do a bit of here and there (senior manager interview 7.12.10).

I see our [Bolton at Home's] role as probably being just one aspect of regeneration but more in the sense of well-managed areas with well-defined boundaries and allocated responsibilities, to improve the appearance of estates and improve people's sense of belonging and sense of wanting to stay (Senior manager interview 08.02.11).

Senior managers were very honest and open about how Bolton at Home has responded to the economic and political climate and the challenges posed by current government policy. Nearly all talked about becoming a major player in service delivery in neighbourhoods as a result of cuts to public service agencies and implications of this for regeneration and engagement. All managers recognised the role of Bolton at Home as a partner with growing influence within the borough and the changing relationship with Bolton

Metropolitan Borough Council in light of the stock transfer and local government cuts. They stressed the importance of partnership working with external agencies, as well as cross-working across different directorates in Bolton at Home to enable change and make a difference at an individual and neighbourhood level.

Regeneration is cross-working across a number of different services and housing is just a small part of that. It's very complex and it's how you tie those together...that's what our neighbourhood teams attempt to do to bring together different agencies to create that change (senior manager interview 16.05.11).

But Bolton at Home isn't the be all and end all of the regeneration offer, we don't pretend to be. The regeneration offer is a partnership offer (31.01.11).

There is this real risk that far from finding ourselves [Bolton at Home] as the coordinating hub of a range of services that soon we are going to find ...there aren't as many people to work with. And the expectations of Bolton at Home will be difficult to manage in terms of how we are going to take up some of the slack from some of the services that disappear. So that's going to be one of the challenges that we need to face (senior manager interview 07.12.10).

5.4.2 Achieving sustainable regeneration

The majority of managers stressed the importance of engagement and regeneration work being sustainable, that is, having a lasting impact on the quality of life for residents and improvement to neighbourhoods. It was said that sustainability should be judged by the residents themselves and based on the extent to which they felt a positive change, difference in their capacity and confidence and outlook. One manager acknowledged the complexity of working in deprived neighbourhoods and that while Bolton at Home was not always successful in achieving longer term benefits to residents, there will be a continual need to keep learning and evaluating regeneration work and engagement activity.

What matters is where people have got the strength, confidence, health and ability...to deal with their own environment the best they can (senior manager interview 11.01.11).

The question "did this produce a change in you?" is the only way of understanding the impact of engagement and if it has been successful. It's about hearts and minds and making it sustainable in those individuals. So that they are a different person to when they started...even if some of the funding or the resources disappear (senior manager interview 27.02.11).

There is no one answer [to the issues in neighbourhoods] and some of the things we [Bolton at Home] have done previously have worked and some haven't, so we should learn from what we have done (senior manager interview 23.05.11).

5.4.3 Community engagement and service delivery

There were numerous ideas about what community engagement was with some managers suggesting an informal conversation based approach with residents, linked to community development and others describing a service-based interaction with tenants where they could influence decision-making. All highlighted the significant role that engagement and services has to play in neighbourhood regeneration and that Bolton at Home as an organisation was committed to developing effective engagement with residents.

Community Engagement is basically a conversation with folk which may stop or lead to action and links to methodologies around Community Development. You can learn so much from that chat [and] discussion with people (senior manager interview 13.02.11)

Engagement is about involving people in decisions that affect them. This could mean involving communities in planning, development, management of services or it may be about tackling the problems of the neighbourhood such as crime, drug misuse, lack of play facilities [and] unemployment (senior manager interview 08.02.11).

For me if you can't get that engagement right, if you can't get the services right, you are wasting your time on everything else (senior manager interview 11.01.11).

When discussing the barriers to engagement, managers discussed the importance of tackling basic needs before expecting meaningful engagement and most articulated the day-to-day social, health and economic challenges that exist for residents living in deprived areas. Managers expressed the view that customer service can affect the ability of the Neighbourhood Management Team to engage with residents, particularly if Bolton at Home are perceived to be failing to deliver a good basic landlord service (as discussed in section 4.4.3). One manager was critical of the explanation provided by service providers as to why residents in poorer neighbourhoods do not engage and argues that agencies need to look to their own services before dismissing local people as apathetic.

If you [resident] haven't got some of the basics in place, i.e. you are not earning your own money and controlling your own destiny, there is a very good chance you won't engage because you are not in control of anything... "Once I'm controlling my destiny and I'm in charge then I will engage; I'm in a better place" (senior manager interview 23.05.11).

[Residents] can't engage if they are running around because their bloody benefits have been stopped every two minutes or because the benefits gone down... People aren't going to engage if they are...worrying sick about what's going on in their day to day lives (senior manager interview 27.02.11).

I think they [Regeneration and Housing Services] are intrinsically linked because if the core offer isn't right, if the repairs is poor, people's experience of Bolton at Home is bad, it gives the Neighbourhood Management Team no chance of engagement with that customer because that customer says 'why should I talk to you when you can't even do my basics?' (Senior manager interview 31.01.11).

If they [local people] don't engage the classic [response from providers] is 'they are apathetic'...not the fact that maybe you did something wrong as a service! (Senior manager interview 11.01.11).

There were various conceptions about how social change in deprived areas occurs, with some managers seeing individual behavioural change as the way that people and places would develop, whilst others spoke about the importance of grass roots collective action assisted by service provision but not as a result of it. A couple of managers suggested Maslow's hierarchy of need underpins Bolton at Home's work and that addressing issues such as financial inclusion and unemployment enables people to develop aspirations and take advantage of other opportunities. Managers talked about how it is vital for service providers to understand the needs of the area and create contextualised strategies to engage different groups or people around various issues. It was suggested that services need to be customer-focused, appropriately targeted and address complex and interrelated issues of residents and neighbourhoods in order to have a long term impact.

[Practitioners] need to listen to the community and look at the problems and work back from that in designing the way you come at it. It's only by listening to the experiences and ideas of the people that live in the community that you find a solution. That's the only way to make a lasting difference (Senior manager interview 16.05.11).

I don't pretend that we are working miracles. I think what we [Bolton at Home] are doing is very small in relative terms but nevertheless, very small things can have a serious impact for those communities and those individuals who are influenced and get to be touched by them (Senior manager interview 07.12.10).

The danger is [practitioners/service providers] thinking we know the answers because we are in a position of having some of that power. Which is what worries me about Regeneration is 'we think we know best'. Until you've lived it you don't know anything about it (Senior manager interview 23.05.11).

5.4.4 Describing community engagement practice

In contrast to the findings from Inquiry Stream 3, the UCAN Review and Inquiry Stream 2 Pre-Step, few managers, during the interviews, acknowledged tensions between Housing and Regeneration Directorates. This could suggest the cultural divide is experienced far stronger at an operational level or some senior managers were not as comfortable speaking to me in confidence about strategic differences of opinion. Managers had different

perspectives about what community engagement meant. There were various views about who the ‘intended audience’ or ‘target market’ of engagement practice should be and what interaction should achieve, how and over what time frame. For some, engagement was about a conversation with residents, not just tenants, started by Bolton at Home or other agencies in the neighbourhood. One manager suggested engagement is “making sure the customer’s hand is on and influencing and shaping the services” (interview 08.02.11). This was supported by other managers who suggested that engagement was primarily about Bolton at Home’s service delivery and how tenants/customers can feed into organisational processes and structures to influence services and have an input into business planning for future provision (SM concept maps 2, 7, 8 and 10 in Appendix 3). One view from managers was that engagement solely concerned the customer or tenant and Bolton at Home services and methods of engagement such as surveys and residents associations that were structured. Engagement in this sense was said to be,

A whole labyrinth-like set of arrangements’ around customer’s appetite to engage based on services delivered. The way the organisation is geared up to respond and connect with people at an appropriate level that they need (Senior manager interview 31.01.11).

[Bolton at Home need to] understand each individual customer and what their needs are in terms of the help and support that they need to sustain a good quality of life within our tenancies (Senior manager interview 08.02.11).

The residents’ association groups are very structured, they [Customer Involvement Team] do a health check and there’s probably not any real thought of the development of that group and where they fit in terms of that neighbourhood (Senior manager interview 11.01.11).

We will always have a place for paper surveys...but we are looking at alternative routes and testing a lot of different routes this year (Senior manager interview 22.02.11).

However a different view about engagement was identified from a couple of respondents who considered the overall aim of engagement was to address inequality and poverty by providing opportunities and support and enabling communities collectively, to find solutions to the issues in areas (SM concept maps 1, 3 and 4). This was a neighbourhood-wide approach, with little attention paid to housing tenure and focused on many different needs that residents had, not necessarily services delivered by Bolton at Home. Managers expressed the view that this kind of engagement needed to offer choice and flexibility for residents in order to be successful.

Putting options, choices, [and] developing those with people...giving people the ability to have that sort of glimpse of something different than their experience, is the first part of engagement (Senior manager interview 27.02.11).

Engagement is to empower people for a journey; we are taking people on a journey. People can become part of the offer by helping to start other people's journeys and having a positive impact on their family (Senior manager interview 01.11.11)

*"I'm not saying there is anything wrong with customer involvement, we've done it for a long time and it's worth doing... [but] the area that has got the greater potential is this more fluid model... working with people where they are and not where we would like them to be...so that they're controlling their own future and where **they** want to be and we are just there to provide a bit of platform and support" (Senior manager interview 7.12.10 emphasis as interview).*

5.4.5 Engagement through Community Development, Art and the UCAN

Some managers discussed the use of community development, art and the UCAN (Urban Care and Neighbourhood) centres to engage in new ways with residents. This echoes findings in Inquiry Stream 3 where the Neighbourhood Management Team discussed how roles and facilities were paramount in delivering their type of engagement practice (section 6.6.1) and Inquiry Stream 1 where users of the UCAN centre talked about how it had made a difference to their lives (section 4.1.2).

Community Development is about involving not just our tenants but the wider community in community projects that might not be wholly related to Bolton at Home but about building capacity within the community to regenerate [it] (Senior manager interview 22.12.10).

The community development member of staff and percent for art [officer] [can]... provide a creative focus for 'what are the issues here?' ...and work some magic...to start coming up with some creative solutions in as empowering way as we could possibly make it (Senior manager interview 07.12.10)

[The UCAN model] has allowed things to just 'be [and] ...it has given people the space and capacity to come into somewhere and sit down and to talk (Senior manager interview 13.02.11).

The UCAN works well because you can jump in and out of it whenever you feel like it. It's having an offer that people can engage with what's right for them (Senior manager interview 01.11.11).

From the interviews, I identified that two different approaches emerged regarding the conceptualisation of engagement by senior managers across all directorates at Bolton at Home. These related strongly to job role and position within the department where engagement was seen as either:

- Both of these approaches were contained in one of the concept maps drawn by one of the senior managers (Figure 15) who distinguished between the first description above as ‘Customer Involvement’ and the more flexible second process as ‘Engagement’.



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Community Engagement according to this concept map, describes a very different approach to community engagement that is dynamic and unpredictable, and concerns the customer journey. This approach requires Bolton at Home to be flexible and work to suit the needs of individuals, families and groups in a neighbourhood and encourages engagement between local people, not just with service providers. Whilst there is a hope that people will move forward positively, this concept map acknowledges that for some, there will be setbacks and it may take a long time to progress in certain areas of their life, hence the squiggly lines. Bolton at Home's role, using community development principles, is to ensure that people can 'jump on and off' services, engagement and arts-based activity and use of the UCAN, when it suits them. It is a more complex, relational and time-consuming approach to engagement but one that they suggested could have a dramatic impact on one individual but also on the lives of other people who are connected to them. During the interview, the manager also conveyed to me the confusion for operational staff and residents that existed because of the adoption of both approaches and the lack of clarity between the purposes of them (senior manager interview 11.01.11).

5.4.7 Consumerist and Participatory Framework

Being mindful of the internal politics and culture of Bolton at Home, I needed to find a framework of analysis that could show the dissonance of the views about engagement but in a positive way to avoid further conflict. It was important to show the benefits of each approach rather than indicating a judgment about one perspective being more valuable than the other. Andrews and Turner's (2006) *Consumerist and Participatory Community Engagement Strategy for Local Democracy* identifies two separate approaches to engagement strategy that are used by local authorities to enhance local democracy as discussed in section 2.2.4. I decided that these two types of engagement approach could be applied within social housing and regeneration context. Using the detail from Andrews and Turner about Consumerist and Participatory engagement, I created a table (Table 8) that reflected the conceptions of engagement that emerged from the senior managers' interviews and mapping. I added headings to enable comparisons to be made between each approach and used it to provide further analysis for the Senior Managers Findings Report (Fox 2012).

	Consumerist	Participatory
Aim	Communication and consultation about consumption of services. Guides program management and organisational functioning	Aligned with community development practice, focus is on inequality, poverty, social justice Based on what local people want, on their terms when they want it. Agencies are there to facilitate and support and enable people.
Audience	Tenant and leaseholder	All in community including children and other services
Character	Easier to implement, measure and link to service objectives	Organic, time consuming, complex, intangible Engagement is both product & process, there is equal value in both
Outcome	Increase quality and use of customer information by users & managers Satisfies regulatory requirements	Develops confidence, self-esteem, self-efficacy Increases wellbeing, social capital, enhances community cohesion, empowerment
Level of commitment	Different levels, ranges from receiving info to Board membership	Requires substantial time and commitment from service providers. Up to local people how and what they want to do and when.
Format	Surveys, meetings, constituted groups	Different types of method/s for different groups. Could also be activities, events, one-to-one relationships, networks, ad hoc or one off meetings Flexible service provision, invited spaces
Approach	Formal and structured, top down	Informal and unstructured, bottom up
Examples	Customer Committee, Scrutiny groups	UCANs, Community Development, Housing Percent for Art
Evaluation	Quantitative and a description of output Numbers attended, changes to service	Qualitative, use of narratives, outcomes Impact on individual journey

Table 7 Consumerist and Participatory Engagement Approach Framework (adapted from Andrews and Turner 2006)

Table 7 shows the two types of engagement approach that exist within Bolton at Home using the Consumerist and Participatory framework adapted from Andrews and Turner (2006). The Consumerist approach is focussed on communication and access to services and concerned with responsiveness to customer demands. It concerns service-based interactions with tenants and involvement includes tenants and residents associations, constituted groups for scrutiny and improvement of services or for governance, such as the Board. Consumerist engagement is necessary to satisfy regulatory requirements and focuses on mainly individuals, traditional methods and pre-determined outcomes. Fraser (1989) argues that consumerist relationships define consumers as the “recipients of pre-defined services” rather than “agents involved in interpreting their needs and in shaping their life conditions” (cited in Bolzan and Gale 2002). For local residents organisational efficiency may also not be the optimal outcome of community engagement. This has significant implications for successful neighbourhood regeneration delivery and sustainability because within such processes, “customers must be convinced that organisations are committed to procedures for giving voice and their outcomes” (Andrews and Turner 2006: 381). This engagement approach may also “limit the extent to which consumers determine their needs, to cast them in unequal relationship with professionals and require them to act as individuals” (Bolzan and Gale 2002: 365).

The Participatory approach to engagement focuses on capacity building and empowering local people to collectively become involved in decision making. For Bolton at Home, Participatory engagement relates to the work of the Neighbourhood Management Teams, UCAN centre services and activities, art-based projects and community development work with community groups and health and wellbeing initiatives. The flexible, friendly and person-centred approach to engagement is emphasised and that people can get help and support on any issue, not just those connected within housing. This approach can be demonstrated by Bolton at Home’s Community Development work to create opportunities and space for people to develop skills, knowledge and experience. This empowering process and outcome enables local people to make a change in any area in their lives and develop plans for action on a collective basis for social justice and equity (Ledwith and Springett: 2010). This connects to definitions of transformative engagement in section 2.4.2 and the model of NMT engagement discussed in Inquiry Stream 3. However, despite their capacity-building value, highly participatory strategies are complex, costly and time-consuming (Andrews and Turner 2006).

5.4.8 Implications for Bolton at Home

As identified in Chapter 2, organisations engaging with local people need to, first, decide the strategic intent and purpose of the engagement either a Consumerist or Participatory approach. Bolton at Home operational staff in various departments suggested different purposes, outcomes and audiences for engagement practice. Tension and conflict was reported between Housing Staff, Neighbourhood Management Team and Customer Involvement Team. In Inquiry Stream 3, the NMT identified that their model of practice was unlike other Bolton at Home departments such as the Knowledge and Information Team and Marketing Department who were reliant on the use of surveys and door knocking to consult with residents and elicit feedback on services. When discussing the framework, the Neighbourhood Management Team expressed concern that other Bolton at Home departments may think they are seeking to adopt an empowering approach to engagement but are actually working towards consumerist outcomes pre-determined by the organisation (section 6.4.1). It was apparent that Bolton at Home senior managers needed to have internal discussions about the approaches and in what circumstances each should be used to develop strategic thinking and link this to operational objectives. The following conclusions about Bolton at Home's senior managers' views on engagement were included within my report (Fox 2012):

1. Both approaches are needed for Bolton at Home to achieve its mission and satisfy regulatory requirements but each approach results in a different type of engagement practice and relationship between Bolton at Home and local people;
2. The importance and underlying values of both approaches need to be articulated within the Community Engagement Strategy to ensure clarity for staff and residents;
3. A greater degree of understanding about the purpose, methods and evaluation of each approach is needed across the organisation and at a managerial and operational level;
4. Further joined up working is required across, and within teams who adopt different approaches to engagement within, and across, Bolton at Home, so they can support each other's work and ease tension between directorates.

Although I did not present recommendations as requested by the IDS Project Group, at the end of the report, I produced questions to stimulate further discussion with senior managers about engagement strategy and practice. These included asking staff how understanding about, and between, the two approaches could be enhanced within Bolton at Home and the extent to which the Community Engagement Strategy could be revised to present both

approaches evenly. This would need to include details about the purpose of the relationship between Bolton at Home and the intended audience, methods, outcome, and measures of success of each approach. I also suggested in the report that managers should consider how both approaches could complement rather than compete with each other, strategically and operationally, and ways that frontline staff could become more involved in strategic thinking and decision making about engagement. Finally, I advised that consideration about how Bolton at Home could capture and share learning from community engagement practice would be invaluable to develop practice and strategy in future.

5.5 Senior Managers' feedback on findings

The findings of the report were presented to the IDS Project Group (25.01.12) and received enthusiastic feedback on the findings and analysis. The Project Group agreed that all staff were responsible for community engagement and that it was important that commitment to the new Community Engagement Strategy was reinforced. We also discussed the different evaluation mechanisms required to measure the success and impact of each approach. I was asked to delay sending out the Senior Managers Findings Report to those who had taken part in the research until after a meeting with the senior managers in June 2012 where the Deputy Director of Housing Regeneration and Community Engagement Manager made a presentation. They highlighted the Consumerist and Participatory Framework and the engagement and community development work done by the Neighbourhood Management Teams. The IDS Project group decided, after this presentation, that there was no need to hold a collective meeting with the senior managers to discuss the findings, despite previous IDS Project Group agreement. I sent out the report to Senior Managers in July 2012 and asked for their thoughts about the findings and my conclusions. From the six people who responded out of 11, I received positive feedback and here are two comments:

I really enjoyed reading the report and agreed with the conclusions and questions it posed for us as an organisation. I think the report and the work that you have done has really got underneath the skin of Bolton at Home, and you've clearly understood us and what we are about as an organisation. I think it's a terrific report and highlights some really interesting and key issues for us going forward – I've enjoyed very much being a part of it (senior manager email 30.07.12).

I'm happy with the content of the report...by drawing out the common themes from the drawings it has enabled you to pull out two distinct approaches and to articulate these in a much clearer way to all (senior manager email 16.02.12).

I was involved in discussion about how key themes from the report can be incorporated into the strategy and assisted the Community Engagement Manager in the re-drafting of the Community Engagement Strategy in March 2013. This Inquiry Stream also supported further work to reflect upon community development practice and the NMT used the findings to develop practice in their Inquiry Stream, section 6. In terms of the overall impact of the research on the organisation, beyond the engagement with the ideas and issues shown above, two senior managers remarked:

It has been really useful to have somebody independent come into the organisation and look at what we are doing with fresh eyes to help create an opportunity for open discussion with the aim to develop community engagement in Bolton at Home (senior manager email 16.02.12).

You completely made things different in terms of the participatory and consumerist framework - that is the way forward now in the organisation (senior manager conversation 29.02.12).

5.6 Summary of Inquiry Stream 2 Findings

Findings from Inquiry Stream 3 showed the importance of developing a community engagement strategy that encompassed all types of engagement practice. It fulfilled Research objectives 4 and 5 that are discussed in section 7.4 and 7.5. Tensions between different departments in Bolton at Home were identified by operational staff in the Pre-Step and a couple of senior managers in the interviews. The findings from the interviews and concept maps of the senior management team indicated there was consensus about the role of Bolton at Home in neighbourhood regeneration but two significant views about the aim and outcomes of community engagement practice. By applying Andrews and Turner's (2006) Consumerist and Participatory Framework to Bolton at Home engagement, organisational strategy could be further discussed and developed. Significant implications were noted about how Bolton at Home was reacting to the external environment and how senior managers can help practitioners like NMT with their articulation of engagement and support the development of practice.

5.7 Inquiry Stream 2 Reflection

In undertaking this Inquiry Stream I experienced a number of challenges. These included issues with power relations, my role in the organisation and the purpose of my work, and the depth of participation in the inquiry. Based on Coghlan and Brannick's (2005) power analysis of organisations, I recognised a number of power relationships that needed to be negotiated during the Inquiry Stream with senior managers. These were between:

- Me and my line manager (Neighbourhood Manager);
- Me and my sponsor (Deputy Director of Regeneration);
- My line manager and others;
- My sponsor and others;
- The senior managers;
- The senior managers and Neighbourhood Management Team;
- Me and the IDS Project Group.

I analysed my reflective diary to identify the most significant of these and the impact they had on the research process and outcome. There were many instances during the planning and taking action stages where I felt that the inquiry was being controlled by one of the IDS Project Team. This was most apparent when I was told not to produce any recommendations for the report and that I would have to delay sending out the report of the findings to the interview participants for six months. In addition, despite previous agreement, I was informed that there would not be an opportunity to facilitate a collective discussion with the senior managers about the Consumerist and Participatory Framework for Engagement Strategy. I was concerned that, although I was keeping this individual happy and so protecting my IDS project sponsorship, I may not have been as openly critical of this decision regarding dissemination and further discussion as I would have liked. This also limited more collaborative working to take place with senior managers. I found Burns' (2007) warning particularly relevant:

If an 'inquiry path' is constructed from the view of a single stakeholder – albeit the most important one...- then it can only go to places it sees (Burns 2007: 18)

A second significant example of power relations at play was when I felt, at times, that I was viewed as a consultant by the IDS Project Group and colleagues within Bolton at Home. This carried an implied suggestion that my role was to produce reports, not ask awkward questions and remain distant from the work of the organisation. A really useful resource at this point in the inquiry was the three types of action research identified by

Maurer and Githens (2009) cited in section 3.3. I recognised that during this Inquiry Stream, I was undertaking ‘Conventional Acton Research’ where:

- *Solutions are pursued that primarily serve the interests of management;*
- *There is little space for questioning existing systems and practices;*
- *Participants’ involvement is peripheral compared to other modes of action research* (Maurer and Githens 2009: 274).

This raised questions about the extent to which insider action researchers, or those receiving sponsorship from an organisation that is part of the research inquiry, can be involved with 2nd and 3rd person inquiry and adopt more dialogic and critical approaches. This reflection also provided me with a valuable insight into working in an organisation and trying to undertake change efforts as discussed in the literature cited in section 3.3.1.

5.8 Inquiry Stream 2 Summary

This Inquiry Stream fulfilled Research Objectives 4 and 5 by examining the conceptualisation and purpose of community engagement across Bolton at Home with senior managers. It contributed to the development of the organisation’s community engagement strategy and the formation of questions regarding two different approaches to community engagement identified in Bolton at Home. I have shown how I adapted a Consumerist and Participatory Framework to apply it to engagement within a housing association context, for strategic and operational purposes. This framework enabled staff to reflect upon two approaches to engagement in regeneration and assisted them in strategic decision making about engagement strategy and practice. This has addressed a gap in knowledge about the development of a housing association’s engagement strategy identified in section 2.4 and further detail about this contribution to the literature is provided in section 8.1.1.

The next chapter discusses Inquiry Stream 3, working with the Neighbourhood Management Team (NMT) to conceptualise their model of engagement practice in Breightmet and discuss challenges to implementation.

Chapter 6: Inquiry Stream 3 - Developing Community Engagement Practice with the Neighbourhood Management Team



Plate 5 Mr One Million Participants (From Inside Housing 10.08.12)

The ‘Mr One Million’ project was created by the Neighbourhood Management Team (NMT) in 2011. The NMT anticipated that a creative engagement process, leading to discussions about unemployment and related issues, would be far more successful in engaging with local unemployed men. The project involved 18-24 year old men in writing the script, acting, and directing a film about unemployment, based on their experiences. The project was delivered by a team of artists and writers commissioned and supported by the NMT. The film they produced, ‘Mr One Million’ premiered at Bolton Cineworld, and was covered in the local and national press. The men discussed their experience of the project after the film was shown to the audience and one participant said,

You don't know what you are capable of until someone pushes you (Mr One Million participant, field notes from film premier 24.07.12).

It's [Mr One Million] one of the best things we've done and I think from an engagement point of view, I'm so glad we persevered with it, I'm so glad we didn't go down the easy route (Team member interview 10.07.12).

Introduction

This chapter about Inquiry Stream 3 provides an account of the research undertaken with the Neighbourhood Management Team (NMT) as they sought to develop more effective ways to engage with Breightmet residents. I was based with the team for three years in the neighbourhood office and this allowed me to develop close working relationships with the NMT. I developed a reflective process to enable staff to consider their experience and capture past lessons about engagement and the impact on local people. This exploration into the NMT's practice fulfils the following research objectives:

- *Conceptualise the model of community engagement practice used by the Neighbourhood Management Team to engage local residents in Breightmet (RO 2);*
- *Explore the implications for organisations and practitioners in implementing this model of community engagement (RO 3);*
- *Explore the strategic implications for Bolton at Home and other UK housing associations in seeking to engage the community in regeneration activities and projects (RO 4).*
- *Examine the extent to which the research has helped to develop organisational community engagement strategy and practice and enable the voices of residents to be heard (RO 5).*

The activities related to the action research cycle in this Inquiry Stream with the NMT are provided on Table 8.

Inquiry Stream	Pre-Step stage	Constructing & creating the inquiry	Planning & taking action	Observing & reflecting
Inquiry Stream 3: Chapter 6: Developing Community Engagement Practice <i>Neighbourhood Management Team (NMT)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussions with the team • Audit of current engagement activity • Document analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is community engagement to you & what have you learnt about engaging residents in Breightmet? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual team interviews • Team workshops to discuss findings from interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team reflect on their concept of community engagement practice & barriers to operation • Creation of new inquiry

Table 8 Inquiry Stream 3: Developing Community Engagement Practice

Within the Pre-Step process, I captured the NMT's expectations for the research and within the Planning and Taking action stage, I undertook two sets of individual interviews with team members. In order to validate the findings of the interviews and my interpretation of them, I facilitated two Cooperative Inquiry workshops with the team to discuss their conceptions of community engagement practice and identify issues that affected the effectiveness of engagement.

I provide my reflection and refer to issues around ownership, participation and emergent design. In terms of links to other Inquiry Streams, the work in Inquiry Stream 2 was influenced by findings about the NMT's practice and comparisons made between senior managers and NMT views of engagement in this chapter. The data from the Inquiry Stream 1 with residents also informed the NMT's thinking about engagement. As a result of the findings from this Inquiry Stream, I created a model for transformative engagement for sustainable regeneration and in so doing addressed a gap in knowledge about transformative engagement discussed in 8.1.2.

6.1 Pre-Step

During the Pre-Step stage, I undertook various activities to develop my knowledge of the area of Brightmet and the Neighbourhood Management Team (NMT), and understand current engagement activity and services. These activities consisted of conducting focus groups, having informal discussions and observing meetings with the NMT. The Pre-Step findings are discussed under the following headings:

1. Neighbourhood Management in Bolton at Home;
2. The UCAN Centre Review;
3. Discussions with the Neighbourhood Management Team.

6.1.1 Neighbourhood Management in Bolton at Home

Bolton at Home has utilised the Neighbourhood Management framework in four of the most deprived areas of Bolton where the majority of their housing stock is located. Bolton at Home works in partnership with Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council to deliver the borough-wide Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy. They co-ordinate and co-fund four neighbourhood management teams, local offices and UCAN centres in neighbourhoods in which there is a concentration of Bolton at Home housing stock. Each of Bolton at Home's neighbourhood management teams work with similar partners and service providers but the neighbourhoods are very different in terms of geography, services delivered, level of engagement and specific issues that need to be addressed. As the teams have a degree of autonomy from Bolton at Home, the personality and working style of the Neighbourhood Manager can lead to very different ways of working for each team. The Brightmet Neighbourhood Management Team (NMT) has the following nine personnel:

- A *Neighbourhood Manager* is responsible for recruiting and managing the team and the budget and for producing and delivering the Neighbourhood Strategic Action Plan. The role is strategic in nature, with access to the higher levels of management in Bolton at Home and Bolton Council. The manager has a *Personal Assistant*;
- An *Urban Care and Neighbourhood Centre (UCAN)*. A *Centre Manager* manages the UCAN centre and develops in partnership with other organisations, the UCAN's services and projects outside the centre;
- Two *UCAN Project Officers* work inside the centre to engage with residents, deliver local services and set up projects in the local area;
- A *Community Development Officer (CDO)* engages and supports local individuals and groups to develop their capacity and work to identify their needs and fulfil them;
- A *Housing Art Officer* is responsible for commissioning artists to work on projects with the community;
- A *Health Development Worker (HDW)* creates initiatives and develops services to improve the health and wellbeing of people in the area (this post is supported by NHS Bolton);
- A *Project Officer* provides financial and administrative support to the team.

6.1.2 The UCAN Review

As shown in Inquiry Stream 2, I was involved in the data collection and report writing for the Urban Care and Neighbourhood (UCAN) Centres Internal Review. The Neighbourhood Manager East co-ordinated the UCAN Review and invited me to conduct data collection, analysis and writing up of findings in reports to feed into the UCAN internal review. As part of this work I ran UCAN staff focus groups and the Brightmet UCAN Project Manager and a Project Officer from the Brightmet Neighbourhood Management Team were involved. The focus groups discussed the changing nature of their roles, engaging with local people and delivering services, and the current challenges they face. I discovered from these focus groups that both UCAN managers and officers agreed that more staff and resources were required in all centres to cope with increasing demand. In light of the fact that most Bolton Council cuts had yet to be implemented, this had considerable resource and cost implications as local services would be further reduced or removed, and demand for UCAN services would increase. Poor record keeping, the monitoring of users and evaluation of the impact of resident engagement with the centres were raised as issues by UCAN staff that required future discussion. The managers talked about the UCANs being a place where users feel comfortable and can come to when they do not know where else to go (Fox 2010b; Fox 2010c).

6.1.3 Discussions with the Neighbourhood Management Team

I held discussions with the Neighbourhood Management Team (NMT) in Breightmet, attended team and partnership meetings, analysed Bolton at Home and partners' documents, and met with residents and partners. Below is a summary of my findings from discussion, observation and attending meetings:

- The team feel a sense of separation between them and other departments of Bolton at Home, particularly about the nature of engagement practice;
- The NMT suggested that the Community Engagement Strategy (Bolton at Home 2010) was not reflective of their engagement practice;
- Unlike other Bolton areas with more established and popular community groups, Breightmet only has a few and they are not very well developed;
- Engaging with local people is extremely difficult and some of the team were at a loss to know what to do to develop relationships with local people;
- The team were, initially, shocked at the level of deprivation and poverty in Breightmet;
- The team strongly believed that engagement should be meaningful, genuine and sustainable to ensure effective regeneration;
- There were significant differences of opinion within the NMT about whether engagement activity was successful and on what basis;
- Project evaluation forms were used for auditing and promotional purposes rather than to develop engagement practice on an individual or collective basis.

6.1.4 Summary of Pre-Step findings

The Pre-Step stage showed the nature of neighbourhood management in Breightmet, the NMT's views about working in the neighbourhood and the level of difficulty experienced in trying to engage with local people. Tensions were articulated between the NMT and other departments in Bolton at Home about the purpose and type of engagement practice and the team did not feel that the Community Engagement Strategy reflected the realities of working in Breightmet. It was apparent that the NMT had a shared understanding about the aim of engagement but there was disagreement about whether activities had been effective and the measures of success for practice. There were limited opportunities for the NMT to undertake monitoring, evaluation and to capture learning from practice. There were also concerns about increasing demand for UCAN Centre services and the potential impact of Council cuts on both residents and services in Breightmet.

6.2 Constructing and Creating the Inquiry

Having gathered a substantial amount of data from attending meetings, analysing documents, having informal discussions and undertaking the UCAN Review data collection, I set about constructing and creating the inquiry in consultation with the Neighbourhood Management Team. I identified four aspects with the NMT that appeared to be central to their practice and presented as the most significant to the research. I have produced Table 9 to provide a summary of my conclusions and the implications for the next stage in the research.

Theme	Pre- Step conclusions	Implications for Constructing & Creating the inquiry
1. Neighbourhood Management Team motivation and approach to engagement	The team shared a passionate belief and commitment to meaningful engagement that has a lasting impact on people and place.	The NMT suggested that senior managers held a different conception of engagement practice and the CE strategy did not highlight the realities of engaging in a deprived area. As there appeared to be consensus in the team, I identified a benefit in articulating their model of engagement practice.
2. Discord about engagement	There were fundamental disagreements within the team about whether past engagement activity was successful.	Despite a deeply held commitment to engaging meaningfully with local people in Breightmet, the team had some very tense and personal discussions about past engagement activity in team meetings and away days. They argued about the extent to which past projects and events achieved their objectives and had a lasting impact. I decided to explore this sensitively in the next stage given the strength of feeling that existed.
3. Reflection and evaluation required	There was a lack of clarity or focus within the team about how to make sense of past engagement activity, learn lessons and develop practice.	I attributed the disagreement about the success of past engagement to be as a result of the team lacking the time, space or framework to reflect and learn from practice either individually or collectively. There were few structured or formal processes in place to evaluate what works and why, or such learning could be carried forward when planning and monitoring future activities and projects. I identified that this could be developed with the NMT during the research.

Table 9 Pre-Step conclusions and implications for next stage

The Constructing and Creating stage aimed to build on the findings from the Pre-Step and fill gaps in knowledge about neighbourhood management delivered by a housing association and housing providers undertaking community engagement. I also wanted to connect the findings from Inquiry Stream 1 (Residents) to the NMT inquiry as the Brightmet context and implications for practice were important learning points. Themes identified from Inquiry Stream 2 about community engagement strategy were significant to this Inquiry Stream and I was mindful of ensuring links between all three inquiries. As with the senior managers' conceptions of community engagement, showing the nature and outcome of engagement, a similar process with the NMT could be developed to enable discussion about their conceptions of engagement for sustainable regeneration. I wanted to know if this articulation would assist the team in identifying areas of agreement and enable them to make sense of past experience and develop positive processes to reflect on learning from past engagement practice. The following inquiry focus was, therefore, developed with the NMT; What is your individual conception of community engagement and what have you learnt from your experience of engaging in Brightmet?

6.3 Planning and Taking Action

It became apparent at the beginning of the research process that getting the majority of the team in one room at one time was too challenging, given the demands on their time, level of staffing and staff absences. In addition, because of the strong differences in opinion about the success of engagement activity when I started the research, I wanted to ensure that each team member could speak to me in confidence, without being affected by the team dynamic and the more dominant personalities. I decided to hold two interviews with seven Neighbourhood Management Team members, individually, from January 2011 and March 2012. After these, I planned two workshops with the team to bring together the findings from the individual interviews, develop a collective intent for the research and develop plans for further action and reflection.

6.3.1 Interviews one and two

In the first round of interviews, I asked each team member to draw their conceptions of engagement and explain their definition, purpose and outcome of their practice. The NMT concept maps are in Appendix 4 numbered 1-7 and referred to in the findings of this Inquiry Stream. The aim of the second interview was to identify and capture learning from practice about the team's individual experiences of working in Brightmet and the nature of engagement activity.

6.3.2 Workshops one and two

After completing the interviews, I planned to hold a minimum of two workshops, intending to create a Co-operative Inquiry (CI) group with the team as described in section 3.5.5. I was interested to establish if a consensus existed within the team about the purpose, nature and outcome of engagement that I had experienced in the Pre-Step stage. I intended, at this point, given my knowledge and good relationships I had built with them, to be able to facilitate discursive meetings with the team. An additional point to note is that, at this stage, more staff had been recruited to the NMT, so it became a realistic option to invite people to come together at the same time.

It was necessary for me to maintain a clear independence from the Neighbourhood Manager who initiated the project so I could present a more neutral position in order to foster collaboration and ownership. The choice was made not to invite the Neighbourhood Manager to the workshops. As they were part of Inquiry Stream 2 with the senior managers and heavily involved with the project from the outset, it was important to provide a forum for the NMT to speak freely without concern for their manager being present.

The first workshop in March 2012 attended by six of the NMT was more structured and direction from me as facilitator. My expectation was that the NMT would take collective ownership of the research in the second workshop and that they would continue to meet as a CI group in the future, with me as facilitator if they wished. I was also mindful that, without ownership of a shared inquiry, “the group will have been set up on a phoney basis and possibilities of co-operation are remote” (Reason 1988: 20). The aim of the first workshop was to discuss the findings collected during interviews and concept maps (Appendix 3 numbers 1-7). In three groups, I provided copies of the concept maps and asked the NMT in groups to consider the following questions about the drawings and their individual conceptions and report back to the whole team:

- What do you think each is saying about community engagement?
- Which concept is closest to your view?
- What common themes or differences about engagement practice can be identified?

My intention was that key themes could be identified and also that the NMT would be able to make sense of, and develop, their individual and collective engagement practice (2nd and 3rd person inquiry as discussed in section 3.6.2). The Consumerist and Participatory Framework section 5.4.7 was introduced to the NMT to ascertain if they considered the framework relevant to their work and which type of engagement strategy they espoused within their practice. This would also provide an important validation check about the outcomes of Inquiry Stream 2 with senior managers. The second workshop held in April 2012, attended by six of the NMT, focussed on the barriers to implementing community engagement practice in Brightmet that had been discussed at the first workshop. There was also an opportunity for the team to create a new research inquiry based on an area of practice they wished to develop. I wrote notes after both workshops and asked the NMT to confirm they were an accurate record of what was discussed or if any changes needed to be made.

6.4 Observing and Reflecting

Following the application of the Consumerist and Participatory Framework (Andrews and Turner 2006) to Bolton at Home engagement in Inquiry Stream 2, this section provides an account of NMT consideration of the framework and which best described their engagement approach in Brightmet.

6.4.1 Consumerist and Participatory Framework

During my analysis of the NMT's conceptual mapping, I found that all of their concept maps supported a Participatory approach to community engagement (reported in section 5.4.7). All individual team members emphasised the importance of engagement that suits the requirements of the residents and not just the organisation. Most of the NMT also stressed the need for political solutions in engagement practice that addressed people's circumstances and how empowerment should always be embedded within the process and be an outcome of any engagement activity. This was in contrast to the senior managers, few of whom talked about the importance of empowering processes and outcomes for local people in engagement practice.

During workshop one, the NMT agreed that the Consumerist and Participatory Framework was a useful way to highlight the different purposes, methods and outcomes of engagement and that both were used by Bolton at Home (workshop notes 27.03.12). Unanimously, the NMT said that they adopt a Participatory approach when engaging with local people in Brightmet, so confirming my analysis of their concept maps (Appendix 3 number 1-7). They also recognised how vital it was to create links between, and within, staff departments that use different approaches to engagement within their organisation. They discussed how some of this cross-departmental working is already happening in Bolton at Home. For example staff in Income Management and the UCAN centre are working together to provide Debt and Welfare services across Bolton delivered by Money Skills and the Citizens Advice Bureau (workshop notes 27.03.12).

The NMT talked about their experience of working with the Customer Involvement Team (CIT) whose role is to develop the more formal and structured tenant involvement to meet regulatory requirements. The CIT are based centrally and create and deliver training for residents. They also have a remit to undertake 'health checks' with tenants and residents associations. At times, certain NMT members said they found it very difficult to support the narrow focus and activities of the CIT as these processes are in sharp contrast to the way the NMT work and the participatory nature of their engagement practice. It was also suggested by the NMT that the CIT and other colleagues may think they are adopting a Participatory approach to engagement when they are actually fulfilling a Consumerist role for the organisation. The NMT had concerns that this may be damaging to the development of relationships with local people and could create confusion for residents when engaging with staff who were employing different engagement strategies (workshop notes 27.03.12).

6.5 Responding to the Brightmet context

As discussed in section 2.3, it is vital for practitioners working in deprived neighbourhoods to understand the area where they are working and the historic, economic and social context. During interviews with the NMT, four themes emerged about the Brightmet neighbourhood that confirmed findings in Inquiry Stream 1 and affected how the NMT model of practice was implemented. These were:

1. The Brightmet puzzle;
2. Poor reputation;
3. Significance of family in Brightmet;
4. Word of mouth and providing incentives.

6.5.1 The Brightmet Puzzle

As identified in Inquiry Stream 1, the ‘Brightmet puzzle’ was how one resident described the situation where local people would agree to attend events and meetings (or, in my case, be interviewed) and, then, without explanation, did not turn up (section 4.4.4). This was confirmed by the NMT in interviews where the team identified how initial invitations to engagement activities and conversations with residents in Brightmet were met with positive responses but, few people, if any, would show up on the day without explanation.

You can come in and they [local people] have all the will in the world and say they will volunteer for anything and then they don't turn up (Team interview 3.10.11).

6.5.2 Poor reputation

Some of the NMT talked about the poor reputation that Brightmet continues to have and how this impacts upon regeneration outcomes as identified in the literature (section 2.5.1). One member of the NMT spoke about how residents are affected by the reputation and this has been a talking point in the UCAN centre. During another interview, a NMT member said that the reputation is unjustified as the team have not experienced “any problems as people are friendly and just want help” (Team member interview 14.9.11). Another highlighted the way reputation influences reports in the local media that tended to focus on more negative aspects and did not focus as much attention on the positive work and activity taking place in Brightmet.

I do think Brightmet is unfairly treated...I do think Brightmet gets a really, really bad press I do think if there could be more good articles about Brightmet and the good work that the people do, it would be better (Team member interview 22.06.11).

When I talk to people in the UCAN, who lived here for years, you still get the impression that reputation still has a big part to play (Team member interview 9.01.12).

6.5.3 Significance of family and social connections in Brightmet

The NMT highlighted the significance of family and social connections in Brightmet as a significant aspect within the Brightmet context. This echoed findings from Inquiry Stream 1, section 4.5.1. In terms of identity and strength of social connections, one NMT member told me that the lads from the Top’ O’ Th’ Brow are so fiercely proud of the area,

they have ‘TOB’ tattoos on their bodies to show this. Other NMT members discussed the close family ties that residents have in the neighbourhood which can be positive and useful for engagement as shown in the quote below, but means it is difficult for “people who are newly moved in and don’t know the way things work round here” (Team member interview 11.05.11). Another team member said:

The other thing I’ve noticed it’s a really tight knit community Brightmet, everyone seems to know each other, they have lot of family, really close...it amazes me how they could live on the other side of the estate but they all seem to know each other. But that is the sense of community spirit and it’s quite nice to see that (Team member interview 09.01.12).

We learnt, early on, that families are important in Brightmet. If you do something where families are involved, you’ll get some success with it. We know that kind of thing works (Team member interview 06.01.12).

6.5.4 Word of mouth and providing incentives

The NMT recognised that they needed to manage their expectations before undertaking any engagement and not expect a response from more than ten people for any one activity (Workshop notes 27.03.12). It was crucial for the team to try and establish a core (albeit small) group of interested and committed people who could get involved, have a positive experience and encourage others to engage by word of mouth. This is shown in Appendix 4 NMT Concept Maps 6 and 7. Word of mouth was considered to be the most cost effective way of promoting activities and services and ‘recruiting’ people to projects and showed that people were having a good experience,

Word of mouth works in Brightmet. The amount of people who come in and you say ‘How did you hear about?’ [They say], ‘My friend told me it was really good’... (Team member interview 09.01.12).

The NMT discussed how having a ‘hook’ or something different and fun that would stimulate interest and maintain engagement was increasingly important for the team within all engagement practice. In the first six months of working in Brightmet, the NMT began to realise that incentives were important as local people engaged more when they could gain something tangible or financial from engagement (Team member interview 21.06.11).

You can’t expect people to make the effort to engage unless it is really special and interesting and something they want (Team member interview 14.9.11).

This learning was used within engagement activity to raise awareness about healthy eating where free soup was provided (Concept map 6). There was also the option for local people to buy the ingredients for £1 to make the soup at home. This was a very popular activity and is being developed in partnership with the NHS to encourage local people to eat more healthy food. In another project, the NMT conducted consultations in a taxi, taking local people to where they needed to go. This was to enable the NMT to find out what local people thought of the area, the services they accessed and the local facilities they visited. The team paid for the cost of the fare in exchange for the information from the residents.

They [residents] got the taxi fare for free, so it was acceptable for them to talk to us
(Team member interview 06.01.12).

6.6 The Neighbourhood Management Team Model of Community Engagement Practice

The first workshop with the NMT discussed the findings from the interviews, compared the individual concept maps and collectively what community engagement means to them (workshop notes 27.03.13). The NMT model of engagement was constructed by me as a result of the main themes of the workshop discussion and is supported by findings from the concept maps and quotes from the NMT interviews (Figure 16).



Figure 16: The Neighbourhood Management Team of Community Engagement Practice in Brightmet

This section provides findings to demonstrate the NMT's model of engagement practice in the Brightmet context previously discussed. The model shown in Figure 16 consists of the following:

1. Roles and Facilities;
2. Transformation;
3. Attributes of practitioners;
4. A partnership approach with cross-cutting themes;
5. Engaging with certain groups.

6.6.1 Roles and Facilities

For the NMT, engagement, service delivery, and community development, are inseparable and interchangeable within their model of practice. As well as funding for the UCAN community centre and its staff, the Brightmet NMT also has a Community Development Officer, Health Development Worker, Housing Arts Officer and UCAN centre staff. The level, quality and commitment to providing staff in certain roles to work in the NMT and the UCAN centre premises are the building block upon which the NMT model of community engagement practice can occur. Put simply, if the resources were not there, it would not only be much more difficult to respond to the Brightmet context and address the challenging issues that local people face, but very difficult to adopt a transformative model of engagement, detailed in the subsequent sections. Next, I will explain how each aspect of the specific roles related to community development, health, arts and the UCAN Centre is integral to the implementation of NMT's model of practice.

Community Development Officer

The Brightmet Community Development Officer (CDO) is responsible for the community engagement work of the NMT and was strongly influenced by the critical approach to community work espoused by Ledwith (2011) as discussed section 2.5.3. For the NMT community engagement practice, a community development approach was adopted within the whole team's practice, rather than solely being within the remit of the community development officer. Community development values such as equality, social justice and collective action were also embedded in all aspects of engagement activity, projects and services conducted by the CDO and NMT as a whole. These values expressed by the NMT in interviews included working with local people on their terms, building and sharing collective knowledge, developing skills and capacity of residents, and were all underpinned with an intention of achieving social justice.

The NMT viewed community development as fundamental to developing and sustaining working relationships between Bolton at Home, partners and residents so that all understand and act on the needs or issues that local people experience.

For me, Community Development is about working with a community. It's about being led by that community and helping making things possible and helping people in the community make things possible for themselves. It's not going in with a clear structure; it's about facilitating change or facilitating people to make changes (Team member interview 11.03.11).

Health Development Worker

The NMT realised that through the role of the Health Development Worker taking the lead on health and wellbeing issues and their knowledge of the health and social care services in the local area, they could ensure that all projects connected to the right service provision and all engagement practice connected to health and wellbeing issues. It was important for the NMT to avoid thinking about health and wellbeing in isolation but to ensure it is considered in every service, project and engagement activity. The NMT acknowledged the substantial health issues that existed in Brightmet and that they needed to be tackled holistically. They appreciated that mental health and wellbeing played a big part in people feeling able to feel in control and make healthy choices. The NMT highlighted, in interviews and workshops, the low levels of self-esteem, confidence and control people have in Brightmet and fractured family relationships. When conducting a health needs assessment in Brightmet, the Health Development Worker (HDW) found that the majority of people did not think it was important to be loved and held very low opinions of themselves and the ability to change their lives (conversation with team member 30.05.12). Therefore the NMT needed to, sensitively, tackle the perception from residents that their health and wellbeing was unimportant.

They [residents] are not bothered about their health round here [but] it all does boil down to health and wellbeing for me (Team member interview 24.05.11).

I think a lot of people don't hear that they are actually worth anything...people have such low opinions of themselves (Team member interview 09.01.12).

A strong connection between health and community development within engagement practice can be seen with the NMT's response to high teenage pregnancy rates, widespread domestic abuse in the area that was not reported, and young women unable to access local services (such as sexual advice). A Girls' Group was created in May 2010, facilitated by

the Community Development Officer and the Health Development Worker for local girls aged 13-18. The weekly evening sessions consisted of arts and crafts, cooking and healthy eating, smoking and drugs awareness, and personal and skills development. The group was regularly attended for three years by seven girls who were known to the Police, Social Services, Youth Inclusion and Support Prevention Team. One safeguarding referral was made concerning abuse and the issue of grooming was also identified as posing a risk to the girls' safety. Another unintended outcome included one girl being taken to the dentist by the HDW because her mum refused to take her. Three girls had the contraceptive implant fitted, which was significant given the high levels of teenage pregnancy in Breightmet.

For me, I think some of them [young girls in Breightmet] want to be loved. No wonder teenage pregnancy is so high because all they want, I suppose, is to give love to a baby, to have something in their life that loves them unconditionally (Team member interview 24.05.11).

It was clear early on that young people were falling through the net all the time because of gaps in services and they didn't go to access existing youth provision. We [the NMT] created a space where they could open up. Some of the conversations sent me home in tears because they were so shocking. But that is the value of the group (Team member interview 11.05.11).

Housing Arts Officer

The Housing Arts Officer is responsible for the creation, commissioning and monitoring of artists to deliver arts-based projects in the neighbourhood. With the incorporation of the Housing Percent for Art programme within the Neighbourhood Management Teams and the allocated resources of a dedicated officer and budgets to create projects and commission artists, Bolton at Home showed strategic level commitment to the role of arts in regeneration. The NMT emphasised, during the interviews, the value of arts-based engagement and the Housing Percent for Art service with a dedicated Breightmet Officer (Concept map 4). The NMT suggested that engaging local people through arts projects generated local excitement for projects and was a fun and enjoyable way for residents to work with Bolton at Home. It was also a delivery mechanism for community development work to start a dialogue with residents, increase people's confidence and generate pride about the neighbourhood (team member interview 09.01.12). An example of arts-based engagement used by the NMT (and connected to other projects) was the Photographer in Residence project referenced in the Inquiry Stream 1. The NMT commissioned Photographer, Les Monaghan, to capture images that reflected work, life and play to

challenge the negative perceptions of Brightmet and engage local people with photography. Workshops were also developed with local schools which drew on the personalities, imagination and aspirations of schoolchildren and linked to NMT work with a local Dads' Group. The photographs were displayed in Bolton Art Gallery and Museum and the exhibition received a mayoral opening. A workshop was held with residents to decide on which photographs to include within the Bolton Art Gallery and Museum archive and workshops to discuss the images with local residents and their views of Brightmet before and after the project. The NMT were said to use "art as the delivery of community development" (Team member interview 29.08.12).

With Housing % for Art, you are going to recruit every time for a project, sometimes with very open briefs which is brilliant because you can bring in new ideas (Team member interview 11.05.11).

UCAN Centre

During the NMT interviews, the team discussed that the first Brightmet UCAN that opened in 2009, knocked through two terraced houses, was not in a central location and was not well suited for a community space. The NMT quickly realised that a new location for the UCAN was required to ensure greater footfall and be in the heart of the community. The move to New Lane near the shops and Post Office has meant a dramatic increase in the numbers of people accessing the centre and is seen by the NMT as having a positive impact on engagement with local people (workshop notes 27.03.13).

The new location [of the UCAN] has made a massive difference. It does surprise you how many people use that space and those shops to meet. The amount of passing traffic is incredible. The UCAN is seen as part of the community; it fits in naturally and perfectly with what else is around it (Team member interview 06.01.12).

The strengths of the UCAN centre were discussed during the first workshop (workshop notes 27.03.12) and these echoed themes from Senior Managers interviews (section 5.4.5) and the UCAN Review findings (section 4.1.2). These included creating a welcoming environment in the centre and the ability of staff to work flexibly to suit the needs of the UCAN users and the Brightmet community, rather than specific agendas or targets. The centre acts as a community hub where people can come and meet, access services and use the telephone and computers free of charge. The NMT stressed the importance of a local

space as a way to connect service providers with local residents (Concept maps 6 and 7). The NMT said that speaking to residents who came into to the UCAN centre provided an opportunity to collect data about the neighbourhood including what issues people were facing and the services they needed. It also enabled the NMT to generate interest and publicise new services or activities.

You can't miss an opportunity. If you are there in front of them [resident], think of all the other things you could be speaking to them about. There's the value in engagement, that connection in that moment in time (Team member interview 06.01.12).

(What do you like about working in the UCAN?) Being involved in the projects, talking to people, helping them out, sending them out with a smile on their face (Team member interview 09.01.12).

Such an engagement and service delivery structure underpinned by community development with local provision of services in a community centre, arts-based projects, and health, was acknowledged as unusual within the housing sector by the NMT (workshop notes 27.03.13). Such a high level of resource, in terms of budget, premises and staffing, was recognised by the NMT as testament to Bolton at Home's commitment to a Neighbourhood Management model and the importance placed upon the need to connect all these aspects together at a local level.

6.6.2 Transformation

The NMT suggested that there were a number of definitions of engagement and these were; the first step of a community development process, local people providing feedback on services, communities interacting with service providers, or practitioners simply having a chat with local people. The aim of engagement for the NMT was to create positive change and ensure that regeneration was sustainable, and have a long lasting impact on the people and neighbourhood of Breightmet. There were fundamental aspects to the transformative intent and outcomes behind the NMT's practice and these were:

1. Empowerment;
2. Building trusting relationships;
3. A flexible and responsive approach;
4. Positive and sustained impact.

Empowerment

For the NMT, empowerment was the main aim of engagement practice. Members agreed, during the first workshop, that practitioners should create processes to engage local people that enable them to make choices and determine their own outcomes (workshop notes 27.03.13). Rather than an organisation imposing ideas and actions onto residents, the team favoured an approach to engagement that meant that local people could decide to take advantage of opportunities if they wanted to, when it was right for them to do so. One member of the NMT depicted the two way process of negotiation and sharing within engagement practice, based on an understanding and knowledge of the neighbourhood and residents from building relationships as well as reliance on statistics. They talked about how practitioners need to manage people's expectations and explain, honestly, the limitations to projects, activity or funding (NMT Concept map 3).

You've got someone who comes in who is really excluded from society and got low self-esteem and you see that journey that someone makes and they engage in one service and they like the UCAN centre and the staff and they want to move onto something else and before you know it, they've had this massive journey (Team member interview 09.01.12).

I'd rather do something that they [local people] want rather than what we think they want (Team member interview 09.01.12).

It's nice though when the team does something and you can see the benefit...that a change has been made, even if it's only a really tiny change...say like...TOB Together they come for tea and toast, it's not going to set the world on fire, but it is a start and it works for them (Team member interview 22.06.11).

Building trusting relationships

During the first workshop, the NMT established that it was crucial to build relationships and develop trust within an ongoing engagement process that is not bound by structure or specific outcomes shown in NMT concept map 1 in Appendix 3. These relationships could support individuals, groups and families, help to increase the capacity and development of community groups and strengthen networking across the voluntary and community sector within Breightmet.

Engagement is dialogue, a relationship, and good engagement should have a result or something that comes out of it. We [the NMT] don't want to be forcing people under duress to enter into a conversation with us. You don't engage for engaging-sake (Team member interview 11.03.11).

If you can build up that relationship and an ongoing sustainable relationship, you've probably got more chance of people getting involved later on. Once people have that relationship they are, probably, more likely to come to you with ideas (Team member interview 22.06.11).

A flexible and responsive approach

Within interviews and discussions during workshop one, the NMT emphasised a flexible, responsive and enabling approach that would result in change for people. It was said that this needed to be based on what people want. During the workshop, the team held the view that all services, engagement and support should fit customers' needs and should be provided in a time and method that suits them. The NMT stressed that their engagement practice placed the resident, "at the heart" or "right in the centre" of any engagement (team member interview 22.03.11). There was a shared view during the workshops that engagement processes and outcomes should be decided by local people who are engaging with service providers and they should decide what, when and how engagement and services are delivered. The NMT suggested that different activities, methods and approaches are required to capture people's interest and allow them to find motivation to become involved on an individual or group basis (NMT Concept maps 1 and 6). The notion of developing engagement and services to suit the needs of the local people was a key aspect within the team's engagement practice.

You might have to change really fundamentally what you are doing [as a service]. You are serving salad, your customer wants chips. But what's the point in providing salad that no one is eating when they want chips! (Team member interview 22.03.12)

This is engagement where there is less structure and where the outcome isn't necessarily, about service improvement, but is about the individual progressing in some way. It's a much freer and flexible relationship, and it's not always clear at the start where you'll end up. It's led by the individual (Team member interview 28.03.12).

Figure 17 shows an individual concept map of the process and outcome of engagement practice from one of the team (NMT Concept Map 7). It highlights the strong link that this person made between service delivery and engagement and how one feeds into the other. The flowchart starts on the left and shows how local people are made aware of services provided by the NMT and the UCAN centre. The arrows indicate how each aspect within this process of engagement and service delivery affects how, why and when someone engages and whether they continue to engage.

Engagement is shown as iterative where resident experiences of the process and outcome of engagement enable the development of future services and engagement practice and is also suggested in NMT concept map 2 in Appendix 4.

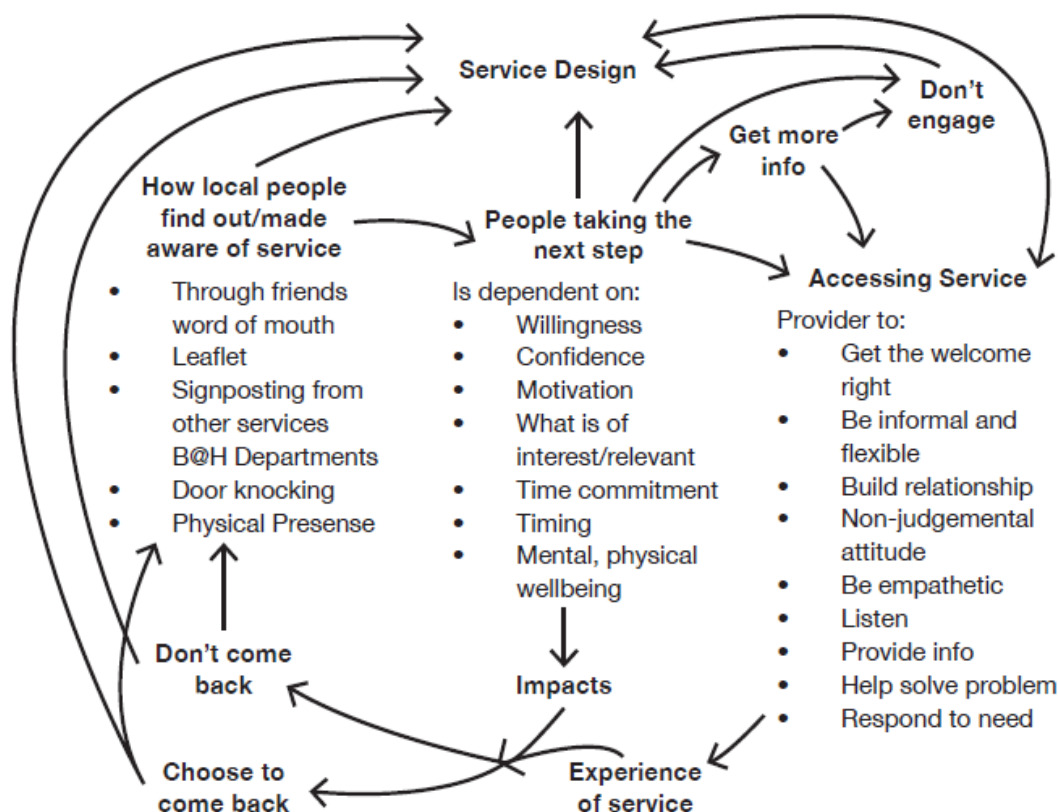


Figure 17 A NMT conception of community engagement practice

Positive and sustained impact

Sustainable engagement practice for the NMT referred to increasing the numbers of people engaging with the NMT and the UCAN centre, experiencing better services, increased confidence and resilience and wellbeing. By enabling individual residents to feel more in control of their lives, the NMT suggested outcomes of this process would include: local people becoming more financial stable, have stronger connections to the community, move into employment or tackle other issues of concern to them.

We didn't want to do something short term. What can you do in a couple of months that can change somebody's life? Over the longer term, you can see the transition, and what difference has been made (Team member interview 14.9.11).

We are not just about bricks and mortar. We can help make the people who live here happy or satisfied with where they live (Team member interview 22.06.11).

The NMT also wanted to work at a collective level to develop the conditions for new groups to emerge, enhance the capacity of existing groups and establish a network of community organisations to foster mutual support across the neighbourhood and create social capital. The team worked with existing community groups, including TOB Together to create ‘Great Brightmet Groups’, a network of community and voluntary organisations in the neighbourhood, designed to work in partnership to hold community events, develop services and support each other. Establishing engagement activity and services to promote personal development and wellbeing and simultaneously expanding opportunities to become involved on a group and neighbourhood wide basis was seen to be vital for sustaining activity in Brightmet but was proving incredibly challenging for the NMT.

Sustainability happens in an area by working with them [residents] and making them see the areas differently...is staff intensive. It is bloody hard work to have a positive and lasting impact on people’s lives and to collect data to measure and support this (Team member interview 22.03.12).

It was agreed in the workshops by the NMT that the regeneration process to change the deep-rooted and complex issues faced by residents in Brightmet was going to take a long time. However, the NMT were committed to the idea of developing engagement outcomes that were sustainable and which would continue after the team have stopped working in the area. One member said their role was not just to “wash in and wash out of Brightmet” but to do something that has a sustainable impact on the people and the area (team member conversation 23.05.13).

We don’t want to make the same mistakes that people [regeneration practitioners] made before in Brightmet. We don’t want to raise expectations doing something and then it stops. That’s not right is it? (Team member interview 06.01.12)

6.6.3 Attributes of practitioners

During interviews, members of the NMT talked about how practitioners and organisations intend to undertake transformative engagement practice but may not have the right skills and attitude to develop empowering processes and engage successfully. The NMT spoke about the challenge of working in Brightmet due to the level of need and the sense of satisfaction they get from making a difference and helping residents.

Themes that emerged from the discussion about the attributes the NMT considered significant for their model of engagement were:

1. Friendly and passionate;
2. Emotionally resilient;
3. Ability to take risks;
4. Reflective practice;
5. Patience and commitment;
6. Adopting a professional but informal approach.

Friendly and passionate

The importance of having passion for the job and genuine interest in local people was strongly expressed by the NMT as “people are passionate about what they are doing and this area, there’s nobody here just doing a job” (interview 11.05.11). During interviews, members talked about their level of commitment to making a difference in Breightmet and the sense of personal satisfaction gained as a result of helping people. Maintaining enthusiasm for the job every day and being able to listen to people without judgement were important attributes noted. One member of the NMT talked in the interview about ‘putting yourself in their shoes’ to understand the lived experience of residents and offer support in a way that would allow people to come to their own decisions.

It massively helps if you care about the service you are providing. If you are passionate about debt or employment or whatever it is, if you bring that passion to this (service) it makes a massive impact on the customer because they recognise that passion, it comes across in everything you do (Team member interview 22.03.12).

I think it’s always important working at the UCAN centre to be non-judgmental, always be open and friendly and always have that time to listen to people. That’s one of the successes of the UCAN. They [residents] are greeted by people who want to listen and want to help them out and that’s how you can engage with them a bit better because they feel more trusting (Team member interview 09.01.12).

Emotionally resilient

This theme emerged after discussions with the team about how they cope with difficult and emotionally disturbing issues that vulnerable residents may be experiencing. On one occasion, one of the UCAN staff was threatened with a knife by a man who was suicidal and needed to calm him down while telephoning the police (team meeting field notes 15.5.12). Another time, members of the NMT had to mislead a violent and abusive husband about the whereabouts of his wife to ensure her safety (field notes 17.01.13). The NMT discussed the value of having good colleagues to talk to, supportive managers and a

really good sense of humour to deal with this kind of emotionally difficult work that is both challenging and satisfying in equal measure.

When you work in this sort of environment where you are meeting customers all the time and you do feel for some that have got a lot of issues going on and you want to go the extra mile and when you do and they are happy about it and you can see that there is a massive weight off their shoulder, that's the most satisfying bit for me (Team member interview 09.01.12).

Ability to take risks

The NMT considered they were willing to take risks and be experimental in order to try new things. This was because of the personalities of the team as well as the recognition that methods of engagement that had, previously, been successful for team members in other areas were not yielding the same, if any, results. The team stressed the importance of moving beyond tokenistic engagement to encouraging local people to be involved in ways that were untested, unique and carried a large amount of risk for the team and the organisation. This can be illustrated with the 'Mr One Million' film project that carried a certain amount of reputational risk for the NMT and Bolton at Home as the film contained swearing, drug dealing and violence and did not offer a very positive view of partner service providers such as the Job Centre. As with all engagement activity, there was a need to justify the costs of such projects to managers in Bolton at Home, local councillors and other stakeholders during a climate of tighter budgets.

It is about being experimental and taking risks and doing things differently, not being afraid if things don't work or if things cause a bit of controversy in an area and being open to the natural processes that happen in an area and clashes or collaborations that happen between people (Team member interview 11.03.11).

Everyone [The NMT] had a wobble 'oh my god we are spending all this money, what are we getting back from it?' (Team member interview 14.9.11)

Reflective practice

The NMT discussed how they met regularly to reflect on whether their activities had been successful and achieved the desired outcomes. This was especially important when the NMT were trying new things involving other partner agencies and groups that were more difficult to reach that carried reputational risk as explained above. At times, the NMT were critical of their past attempts at engagement, despite collective agreement to undertake the activities and spend the neighbourhood management budget in that way.

They all recognised the significance of being clear about the expectations from engagement, learning from what works, or more crucially, what does not work, in order to develop new activities that are successful.

No one would say we've had a smooth ride over the last 2 years but I'd much rather be in an environment where people openly reflect and learn from practice. In a challenging area like Brightmet...the only reference point for when you've been successful is each other and your own understanding and experience of projects (Team member interview 11.05.11).

If you try and engage with people and it doesn't work, you try something else (Team member interview 06.01.14).

Patience and commitment

The interviews and discussions with the NMT also illustrated that in their view, engagement is harder to undertake in Brightmet because of the lack of community-based infrastructure and limited resident involvement in community groups. Team members were clear about the scale of the challenge in deprived areas like Brightmet, given the lack of previous investment, economic and social problems spanning generations and the need for regeneration to go beyond a 'bricks and mortar' approach, in order to have a sustainable impact on people and place. The NMT recognised the low levels of wellbeing, self-esteem and confidence that individuals had and aside from the strong family connections for some residents, there was not much social capital evident in Brightmet due to the lack of community infrastructure and voluntary groups. It appeared to the NMT that people lacked the belief that they could make changes individually and collectively and that if they acted together, things could improve. One team member focussed in their conceptual map on how engagement practice is dependent on taking 'baby steps' to develop relationships with local people (NMT Concept map 5). The intensive, incremental and time-consuming process necessary to achieving successful engagement and the development of relationships with local people to enhance people's feeling of efficacy and wellbeing was highlighted by the NMT during the workshops (workshop notes 27.03.12 and 25.04.12).

It has taken a long time to get to know people in the area and develop trust to create services that they need (Team member conversation 25.05.13).

If people haven't got confidence to complain, come to the UCAN, join in something, to go to the doctors...you're just not going to do anything are you? (Team member interview 10.07.12).

Adopting a professional but informal approach

The NMT adopted an informal but professional approach where team members went out to different venues in Breightmet to introduce themselves and start conversations with residents in places they felt at ease. This outreach activity was very important as a way to meet residents who were not involved in community groups, did not come into the UCAN or lived in a different part of the estate. The NMT also felt that relationships could be developed more easily when speaking to residents as a member of the Neighbourhood Management Team rather than branded as a Bolton at Home employee. During interviews, team members commented on the benefits of not wearing Bolton at Home branded clothing. They thought this created a barrier between residents because of low levels of trust shown towards agencies. One of the NMT said that during a bus consultation in Breightmet:

We didn't want it [the bus] branded Bolton at Home as people wouldn't come in if it looks official (Team member interview 14.9.11).

You've got to engage where the people are more comfortable, like in the pub, if they are comfortable and more relaxed in there and more open, well you get your backside down to the pub or to the school playground. Wherever people naturally congregate and they are at their most relaxed and they feel confident in that group then I think for me that's where you've got to go (Team member interview 22.06.11).

The next comment is from a team member who was involved in a consultation with local people in Breightmet about improvement works and was not dressed in the casual clothing that the NMT wear on a day-to-day basis. He found that people reacted less positively to him when he was smartly dressed as the perception from residents was that he was from the Housing Services enforcement team and there to follow up about rent arrears.

It's a small thing but I did dress with a shirt and pants [trousers,] and as I'm trying tell people about why I'm here [door knocking]....they thought I was here for housing services about the rent...you could just see it. People are more willing to open up [when in informal clothes] rather than seeing someone who is dead official and seems like a bit of an authority figure (Team member interview 09.01.12).

Team members talked in the workshops about breaking down barriers created by the role of 'professional' and 'customer' and the team were clear they did not want to be explicitly associated with Bolton at Home in its role as 'landlord'. The difference between the two

for one NMT member is shown in NMT Concept map 1 in Appendix 3. Whilst regeneration and housing in theory should be synonymous, the team put forward the view that many residents had a very negative perception of Bolton at Home as their landlord. This meant it was, sometimes, to the team's advantage to not be identified with the organisation or other departments of Bolton at Home.

The reason for the success of the neighbourhood management model at Bolton at Home is not being tied to a housing model. It provides the team with the freedom to not be associated with the landlord (Conversation with NMT member 23.05.13).

6.6.4 A partnership approach with cross-cutting themes

The NMT acknowledged that residents were only concerned about crime and community safety compared to the six traditional neighbourhood management themes. However, the team recognised there was a need to address fundamental cross-cutting issues that exist for people (for example, building confidence and developing support networks and wellbeing) before tackling education attainment, health behaviour and choices, undertaking training or gaining employment. Increasingly, the NMT found that the aspects of daily life of most concern to residents were financial issues, including debt, managing money, paying bills and being able to afford food. The NMT agreed that by focussing on these cross-cutting fundamental issues (and achieving social justice) with other service providers, their model of engagement practice would better respond to the needs of Brightmet and lead to sustainable outcomes (workshop notes 27.03.13). One example was the Women's Project that was developed with the Children's Centres to support women across Brightmet and enable them to tackle issues in their lives and form groups to take collective action.

Bring all things we are trying to look at – unemployment support, welfare reform changes together in a much more natural way of doing it, through women coming together. But with a Community Development approach...what would that look like, what these groups would be and how they would be maintained and the silver thread running through the middle – sustainability (Team member interview 29.02.12).

6.6.5 Engaging with certain groups

Designing activities that were specific and targeted for local people in terms of type of activity, age group or target market was seen as paramount by the NMT in attracting interest to a project or service. The 'target market' for engagement practice was considered to start with the individual, who could involve and influence groups, families,

people with shared interests or demographics and those who live in the same area. One example is 18-24 year old unemployed men, because the NMT recognised that youth unemployment was an issue that needed to be tackled in Breightmet and should be an engagement priority.

18-24 year old Unemployed men

The ‘Mr One Million’ 18-24 Arts project was created by the NMT in 2011 and involved 18-24 year old men in writing, acting, directing and writing music for a film about unemployment using their experiences. It was anticipated that a creative engagement process leading to discussions about unemployment and related issues would be far more successful in engaging with local unemployed men than a project solely focused on securing employment and becoming ‘job ready’.

To be honest some of these young lads are still a long way away from the job market - nowhere near job ready. What do you do, just ignore them? Or do you do something constructive and be comfortable with continuing to support them?
(Team member interview 10.07.12)

The project was delivered by a team of artists and writers commissioned and supported by the NMT and external funding was provided by Warburtons (workshop notes 27.03.13). Despite assurances from some local men that they were interested in an initial meeting, with the promise of pizza and computer games, to discuss ideas in a local community centre, no-one attended. As a result, the artists had to rethink their engagement strategy and venue choice. Project Manager Paul Hine said in his report, “Getting them through the door was the hardest part”, and he reflected that,

We want them (18-24 men) to be thinking of reasons why they shouldn’t take part not why they should.....we want to create an opportunity that is irresistible to them
(Hine 2013).

By focusing on experiences of unemployment, holding the sessions in a function room in a local pub, and working with two young actresses to help recruit and develop the project, engagement with local men gained momentum. Ten men were recruited to the project by the artists (with help from NMT) through contact with the UCAN, leaflet drops and door knocking. These men regularly attended the session, receiving a free lunch and £10 per session. The NMT talked in the workshops about how the impact on the men was substantial. The men spoke, after the film premier, about how much they had gained from

involvement with the project in terms of skills, confidence, friendships and a more positive outlook. Three men went on to gain employment and as well as experiencing an increase in confidence, they all developed new skills and gained a new peer support network. Participants talked about how the project gave them “a purpose and a reason to get up in the morning” and how they surprised themselves with what they had achieved (field notes from film premier 24.07.12). Since the project ended, the men have produced another film about fatherhood, which led to them acquiring new members through word of mouth.

This guy lived up here [Brightmet] ...never went out his flat and he got involved with this [Mr One Million] and he said ‘I actually feel happy now’....it’s not about employment; this is something far far deeper about basic human need (Team member interview 10.07.12).

6.7 Issues affecting community engagement practice and the NMT response

Despite the complexity associated with determining the impact of engagement and regeneration, especially on a short term basis, the NMT were proud of what had been achieved since 2009 and were starting to see the impact of their work in Brightmet (NMT team member conversation 23.05.13). During the two workshops, NMT interviews and conversations, the team reflected upon the main challenges to developing practice, and how the NMT could respond to them. I have synthesised the significant findings into the following areas:

1. Increasing level of need;
2. Variable services and cuts to partner budgets;
3. Tension between types of engagement approach.

6.7.1 Increasing level of need

The NMT were facing increasing levels of need and demand for services and support in Brightmet. In addition, the people were coming to the NMT with more complex issues that required a greater level of support and this impacted on what the team could do across the neighbourhood. The scale of the challenge in Brightmet to support people to feed and clothe themselves and their children, heat their homes and have enough money to survive was proving immense for the NMT. This was quite apart from the other areas of holistic practice that neighbourhood management was intended to address. The Business Planning session in 2013 was for the NMT to decide neighbourhood management priorities in the coming year. The team agreed that they needed to go ‘back to basics’ and focus on

economic issues, as local people were experiencing greater hardship around food, employment and debt issues as a result of the economic context and changes to benefits (NMT Business Planning session field notes 06.02.13).

6.7.2 Variable services and cuts to partner budgets

When the NMT was created in 2009, there were few locally delivered services in Breightmet, as the majority of NHS, Youth Services and other Council services were delivered from Bolton town centre rather than in the neighbourhood boroughs. An example of this was the lack of sexual health service in the area for younger women, which is of particular importance given the rates of teenage pregnancy and rising numbers of sexually transmitted diseases reported in the area (Team member interview 24.05.11). Since Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council experienced significant cuts to their budget, some neighbourhood services that existed have been removed completely. The capacity of service providers (such as the Police, Youth Services, Environmental and Health Services) and other NMT partners to develop or create new services in Breightmet was therefore seriously compromised. The NMT suggested that many partners were struggling to commit to the resourcing of any service without substantial support in terms of budget and staffing from Bolton at Home.

Prove need, prove it [engagement] works and then Youth Services take over. That was the plan and then the cuts happened (Team member interview 11.05.11).

During the second workshop, one team member commented that the NMT's role has changed dramatically since these changes were introduced (workshop notes 25.04.12). Before the cuts, the NMT was undertaking the role of service co-ordinator to bring partners with their service budgets together to identify gaps in provision as intended with the Neighbourhood Management framework of regeneration as discussed in section 2.4. Following the cuts and a realisation about the lack of service provision in Breightmet, the NMT have been directly commissioning and delivering services. This had impacted on the capacity of the NMT at a time of increasing demand for services, but at the same time, enabled the NMT to create engagement activities and services in accordance with their model of engagement, rather than fitting in with a partner's engagement practice (workshop notes 25.04.12).

6.7.3 Tension between types of engagement approach

During the workshop discussions the NMT said that partners have found engaging with people in Brightmet extremely difficult (workshop notes 27.03.12 and 25.04.12). The team thought that service providers such as the National Health Service, police, the council, community and voluntary service, were likely to go to other places where engagement is easier to get quick wins, enabling them to meet targets. Sometimes, the NMT suggested that partners lacked the same ideas about engagement as they did and this presented challenges to partnership working as they were coming from a different perspective. In interviews, all of the team voiced their concerns about community engagement that appears to be, merely, satisfying funding requirements or an attempt to placate communities through consultation exercises that are not acted upon. They spoke about how this narrow engagement strategy, emphasised a one way approach from agency to community, and created mistrust and confusion between service providers and local people.

Service providers are having to evidence need in order to secure funding. That's how you end up with a skewed version of what community engagement is because it isn't just a survey type of approach; it should be an ongoing interaction between people who live in the area and the services, where one feeds into the other (Team member interview 22.03.12).

We (NMT and other partners) were so far apart in terms of how we were thinking and operating...Services need to identify a hook or focus or demographic to work with instead of a one size fits all approach (Team member interview 11.05.11).

It was also suggested by the team that engagement practitioners need to be realistic in terms of expectations of the people they are working with and staff need to consider whether their message is relevant and appropriate to the audience. It was implied by the team that, for some agencies, engagement is nominal and superficial rather than addressing actual need in a way that local people want or require (field notes 5.07.11). The NMT was critical of engagement practice that was target and outcome-driven, involving “ticking boxes and exaggerating successes” (field notes 5.07.11), like the “Emperor’s new clothes – no one is looking at the real picture of what is happening” (field notes 28.01.10).

*People often [say] ‘I’ve done community engagement, we did these surveys on this estate’ and they tick the box that can sit in a file somewhere and you’ve proved whatever it is that you wanted to prove because it’s bound to because you were looking for it in the first place. You can’t do community engagement **to** people (Team member interview 22.03.12 emphasis as interview).*

It's just some of these meetings [Area Forum] feel pointless, absolutely pointless. They seem to go around the houses and keep bringing the same things up meeting after meeting. Nothing moves forward, nothing gets answered and nothing gets done (Team member interview 09.01.12).

The NMT suggested that there was a lack of understanding by Bolton at Home colleagues about the challenges of Brightmet and the work of the Neighbourhood Management Team (field notes 13.10.10). This meant that the team felt the divide between those within Bolton at Home undertaking consumerist roles; for example, the Customer Involvement Team. This reflects back to Inquiry Stream 2 and how Bolton at Home can articulate the different approaches to engagement and ensure links are developed between them. The NMT also highlighted the amount of 'silo working' that takes place with limited communication or cross-departmental working in Bolton at Home. When asked about housing staff, this NMT member said,

They are a separate entity aren't they? Not necessarily people-focussed more paperwork-focused. I just don't think they get what people have to live through. Everything is about figures, they are sat in little offices...even the ones based in the community are very insular. They are not bothered about the other issues. (Team member interview 09.01.12).

When attempts have been made to communicate with other teams and inform them about what the team is doing, they felt there had been little received in return. They felt frustrated at the lack of close working relationship between other departments and suggested in the workshops that they still encounter resistance from other parts of the organisation for their way of working, their model of engagement and its purpose (workshop notes 27.03.12). However, the NMT also recognised that the distance they have from other teams may provide more freedom and autonomy. During the workshop, it was reiterated that a business case for a participatory approach to engagement continually needs to be made despite Bolton at Home's commitment to supporting residents and working to achieve social justice (workshop notes 27.03.12).

6.8 Creation of a new Research Inquiry

During both workshops the NMT discussed how they could make sense of their practice individually and collectively (workshop notes 27.03.12 and 25.04.12). The importance of being able to track interactions, quantify engagement and capture impact was highlighted as key in understanding where engagement practice had been successful by the NMT. This would enable the development of services and future projects with local people as well as demonstrating the value of the NMT community engagement practice to other colleagues in Bolton at Home, partners and external funders. The NMT suggested that producing data to explain the impact of engagement might also counter scepticism about adopting a participatory strategy to engagement (workshop notes 25.04.12). These criticisms include whether activities represent value for money, achieves organisational objectives, and how the tangible impact of engagement activity and staff time can be measured. The NMT were aware that as budgets became more restrictive, it was necessary to not only sustain the current level of investment in Brightmet but also to secure more funding in the future. The NMT also wanted to repay the trust and autonomy granted to them by Bolton at Home and to justify the amount of time and money spent on staffing and projects.

We were forced to be more creative and thank God we work for an organisation that gave us the freedom to try new things and adopt a customer focused approach. Bolton at Home allowed us to work at the speed of the community and develop services around that. They could have said, 'This isn't working, move on and try something else' (Reflection with member of NMT 23.05.13).

As a result of these discussions, at the end of the second workshop, the NMT decided to create a pilot study around a new research inquiry to establish a coherent way of collecting both qualitative and quantitative data about engagement activity with local people (workshop notes 25.04.12). The NMT wanted to find a way to collect information from each team member about interactions with residents and the outcome of conversations, project work, and visits to the UCAN or attending meetings. This data would be inputted into electronic files so that over time, the NMT could capture the journey travelled, or the pathway, taken by local people who had accessed different services and support and engagement activities. This would also establish where improvements to engagement activity or service delivery could be made.

I don't like statistics and big sweeping generalisations, I like case studies and personal stories and we need to understand these to do our jobs round here (Team member interview 11.05.11).

We do reflect but I think but I think we do reflect naturally but I don't think there is structure to that and I think there is some value in adding a more structured approach to that reflection (Team member interview 29.02.12).

It was agreed it was important to find out what services, projects and members of the team people accessed, identify patterns and gaps and understand why people do not continue to engage. The team agreed upon 14 names for the pilot including people the team knew quite well and new people who have not been as engaged with the NMT. There was a suggestion that a case conference meeting could be set up with the NMT on a regular basis to talk about the progress of “frequent flyers”, customers who have a lot of interaction with the team (field notes 25.04.12). They agreed to continue to hold meetings about this without my input and I received this comment from one of the NMT about the work done with the team.

I don't think you realise what impact you've had. You've solidified everything. Everything has come together like it was meant to be and the conversations we have about community engagement are different. I think its ace (Team member interview 10.10.12).

6.9 Summary of Inquiry Stream 3 Findings

Findings from Inquiry Stream 3 show the difficulty faced by the NMT in developing transformative community engagement practice in Brightmet. Challenges included the local context, where local people were distrustful of service providers, the limited number of community groups already established, the amount of capacity building that existing groups required and cuts to partner budgets and services. The NMT found that the Consumerist and Participatory Framework applied to their practice and helped to explain why tension existed between different departments in Bolton at Home and other partners. Using concept maps, interviews and workshops, the NMT articulated their model of community engagement practice in Brightmet in terms of the roles and facilities required to connect community development, health and wellbeing, arts based engagement and a local community centre, and the goal of achieving engagement that is transformative in intent and outcome. The NMT highlighted the skills and character of practitioners needed to undertake this work in deprived neighbourhoods such as Brightmet and the importance of working in partnership across cross-cutting themes, to ensure a holistic approach to engagement. As shown with the ‘Mr One Million’ example, the NMT indicated how engagement works best when it is tailored for the needs of a specific group of people and

there is an appropriate incentive to generate interest in the opportunity in the first instance. The NMT decided to create their own research inquiry to evaluate the effectiveness of practice and develop a more structured process to reflect and learn about their experience and apply this to future engagement.

6.10 Inquiry Stream 3 Reflection

A number of challenges emerged from the NMT Inquiry Stream, given the participants, their roles and ideas about the research. I was expecting in the first instance to create a highly collaborative action research process based on Co-operative Inquiry group work but there appeared to be little consensus between team members and their manager about what the research should consider. They presented numerous suggestions that I, not 'we', could further explore and evaluate the work of other partners and teams such as Bolton at Home's Housing Management service. The NMT considered the priority for the research should be the development of others' engagement activity rather than to establish a reflective process to reflect and take action on their practice. This was despite the Neighbourhood Manager's insistence that the research should focus on the development of the NMT's engagement practice.

It was vital for me, having been influenced by the literature about participation, that the team took ownership of the research. I was very conscious of inviting team members to be a part of the interviews and to voluntarily join the workshops. They needed to make a decision about whether they wanted to get involved, rather than being told to by the Neighbourhood Manager who initiated the research project. After the second workshop, when a new research inquiry had been created, the team said that I no longer needed to be involved with any subsequent discussions. I took this as a positive sign that they had taken ownership of the research and wanted to continue developing their reflection and action inquiry and had achieved a level of ownership towards the process. On reflection, I could have expressed more strongly, from the beginning that the inquiry was to be guided and, preferably, led by them and not something that was pre-determined by me. I think the emergent nature of the research and my intended role of facilitator may have created confusion. The comment below, intended as a compliment, indicates this lack of clarity.

No one had a 100% fixed idea of what you were doing and had no fixed expectations (NMT Interview 2.3.12).

Towards the end of the inquiry, I had some very positive experiences when facilitating the NMT's Business Planning session in February 2013 and workshops with all Community Development Officers across Bolton at Home to discuss developing a model of community development practice and an evaluation framework. These sessions involved a high level of in-depth reflection, both individual and collectively about practice and discussion about new ideas and plans for action. I was very pleased to receive this comment, via email, after one of the workshops I had facilitated.

What an unexpected day! Thanks, as ever, for your clever and genuine support and your ability to link things together...It was refreshing to have a session which really got behind the surface view and into the nuts and bolts (Email from NMT workshop participant 28.03.12).

6.11 Inquiry Stream 3 Summary

This chapter has shown the findings from Inquiry Stream 3 with the Neighbourhood Management Team on developing community engagement practice and has fulfilled Research Objectives 3, 4 and 5. It has identified the NMT's conceptions of community engagement practice and what they learnt about engaging successfully with local people. Findings have indicated the significance of wellbeing when considering the capacity and willingness of people to engage. It was also recognised that engaging with residents was increasingly challenging and that less resources were having a significant impact on the day-to-day work of the NMT and the extent to which they could support local people.

The next chapter synthesises all the findings from the three Inquiry Streams related to my research objectives, explains how I have explored the gaps in knowledge identified in section 2 and identified implications for practitioners.

Chapter 7 Discussion

Introduction

In previous chapters, I explained why community engagement in regeneration is an important topic for exploration and why past research about narrow conceptions did not respond to the challenges faced by Bolton at Home in the Brightmet neighbourhood. This chapter seeks to bring together the various aspects from the data presentation and analysis to draw out the key issues. Using each research objective below, I provide a discussion of my findings, informed by the Literature Review and the three Inquiry Streams, identifying implications arising from the research.

1. *Characterise the lived experience of residents of the Brightmet neighbourhood and the experience of community engagement with Bolton at Home;*
2. *Conceptualise the model of community engagement practice used by the Neighbourhood Management Team to engage local residents;*
3. *Explore the implications for practitioners in implementing this model of community engagement practice;*
4. *Analyse the strategic implications for Bolton at Home and other UK housing associations in seeking to engage the community in regeneration activities and projects;*
5. *Examine the extent to which the research has informed the development of organisational community engagement strategy and practice and enabled the voices of residents to be heard.*

The three Inquiry Streams were:

- Inquiry Stream 1: The Residents' Lived Experience.
The inquiry stream was conducted with residents of Brightmet in a neighbourhood setting;
- Inquiry Stream 2: Development of Community Engagement Strategy
Working with senior managers in Bolton at Home;
- Inquiry Stream 3: Developing Community Engagement Practice
Inquiry stream undertaken with the Neighbourhood Management Team of Bolton at Home, based in their offices and a community centre in Brightmet.

7.1 Research Objective 1: The Lived Experience of Brightmet Residents

This research objective sought to *characterise the lived experience of residents of the Brightmet neighbourhood and the experience of community engagement with Bolton at Home*. Findings from Inquiry Stream 1 and 2 fulfil this research objective and there are five key implications from the findings about the lived experience of Brightmet residents. These include the level of community activity and capacity of existing volunteers, barriers

to engagement, a lack of trust towards service providers, the impact of past engagement and the importance of family and social connections.

Firstly, there were a few community groups in the neighbourhood (section 4.1.3) and it was a challenge for practitioners in Brightmet to establish why people are not interested in engaging with them (section 4.6). It was particularly difficult for resident volunteers and the NMT to understand which activities would be attractive and successful when other residents expressed an interest in an activity and did not attend, without explanation (section 6.5). This was described by one resident as “The Brightmet Puzzle - when people say they will come and don’t” (section 4.4.4). This is an aspect of engagement neglected in the literature that may relate solely to the Brightmet context. The inquiry found that a minority of residents were actively involved with projects and groups in Brightmet and (section 4.1.3). One member of the TOB Together community group reported feeling overwhelmed when trying to juggle her voluntary work, other commitments and family and health issues (section 4.1.3). These findings confirmed conclusions from other studies about a small number of people engaging in deprived neighbourhoods, sustaining in-depth and long-term commitment and the possibility of burnout (section 2.1.6).

Secondly, the inquiry found that it is helpful for practitioners to address barriers to engagement for residents, as identified in section 2.1.6. Most notably the need to alleviate the day to day struggles that people experience was expressed by a senior manager from Inquiry Stream 3 who said that “People aren’t going to engage if they are...worrying sick about what’s going on in their day-to-day lives” (section 5.4.2). This echoes findings from Beresford and Hoban (2005) about tackling poverty in regeneration initiatives. Rational Choice Theory can explain motivations for engagement and that most residents make a rational choice about whether to become involved based on what can be gained or lost from any interaction (section 2.7.2). It is a useful theory to explain why, instead of being apathetic, residents choose not to engage because of different personal reasons. Rational Choice Theory may apply to Brightmet residents as the NMT discovered that engagement activities that provided tangible and material incentives were more effective (section 6.5.3). This could be because residents decided there was more benefit to engaging and this outweighs the cost of being involved.

Thirdly, Breightmet residents reported feeling a lack of trust towards service providers and that few people reported incidents to the police for fear of being labelled a ‘snitch’ (section 4.4.3). Residents suggested that service providers failed to respond to concerns and were not doing enough to provide basic standards of customer care such as the repairs service at Bolton at Home and the police’s response to anti-social behaviour (section 4.5.2). Findings showed that Bolton at Home housing staff were viewed more negatively compared with the NMT (section 4.4.3). The inquiry suggests that in order to develop engagement activity, practitioners working in deprived neighbourhoods may need to improve the quality and response of services to build trust with residents in the first instance. This links to literature about the factors affecting engagement and successful regeneration, such as the importance of trust in service providers (section 2.1.6) and quality of services in deprived areas (section 2.5.1).

Findings demonstrated that past regeneration schemes may have contributed to residents feeling let down, as their impact was largely limited in Breightmet. Similar problems that were prevalent in the 1990s remained largely unresolved in 2010, such as unemployment and the anti-social behaviour of children and young people (section 4.4.1). Breightmet was described as ‘a bruised community’ by one resident because of past regeneration schemes that had stopped suddenly when funding had come to an end (section 4.4.2). Community engagement activity was not sustained or embedded within the neighbourhood so local community groups and projects ceased to exist without staff or a budget to support them. The importance of a long term commitment from organisations to work intensively and holistically on a range of regeneration activities is articulated in the literature (section 2.4.5). Research has supported the notion that past regeneration can affect current engagement practice (section 2.1.6). The NMT were attempting to avoid the past mistakes of regeneration in Breightmet, particularly the sudden stop to funding and support to community groups and engagement initiatives (section 6.5.1). The NMT hoped that by supporting community groups and building the capacity and resilience of residents to exist independently from agency support and resources, engagement activity would be more sustainable in Breightmet. However, a contradiction is that, in the short-term, at least, greater staffing and time resources need to be invested by providers, such as Bolton at Home, to strengthen the existing capacity of volunteers already involved.

Finally, the inquiry found that family connections in Breightmet were very important and residents felt that a sense of community existed in Breightmet because people know and support each other (section 4.5.1). However, levels of attachment to the neighbourhood varied and appeared to be based on whether residents had strong family connections and the type of support networks they had in the neighbourhood (section 4.4.1). The link between resident attachment to a neighbourhood and the extent to which people were likely to stay and engage with service providers were congruent with findings from the literature (section 2.5.1). Residents acknowledged that Breightmet still had a poor reputation, however, two participants suggested that this was unjustified because improvements had been made to the neighbourhood and they considered it a safe place to live (section 4.4.1). These findings concur with the argument from Dean and Hastings (2000) that practitioners undertaking regeneration work also need to address the issues of stigma that exist in deprived areas, if initiatives are to have a lasting impact. It is therefore crucial that practitioners undertaking engagement reinforce the feelings of pride and positive perception that some residents have in deprived neighbourhoods. By building relationships with other residents to encourage involvement, focussing on family and social connections and the levels of attachment people have to each other, there is greater likelihood of engagement practice being effective, successful and sustainable.

7.2 Research Objective 2: Conceptualisation of Community Engagement in Breightmet

This research objective was to *conceptualise the model of community engagement practice used by the Neighbourhood Management Team (NMT) to engage local residents in Breightmet*. The findings in the discussion are drawn from the examination of the NMT's model of engagement practice in Inquiry Stream 3, section 6.5 and feature a number of key aspects. These are roles and facilities, informal outreach, holistic approach to tackle health and poverty and practitioner attributes.

Firstly, three key individual roles in the NMT were identified to implement their model of practice. These were: 1) a Community Development Officer to ensure resource and commitment to community development values; 2) a Health Development Worker to enable a connection to wellbeing in all engagement activity and link this to health services delivered in the area; and 3) A Housing Arts Officer to commission and fund innovative

arts based engagement projects (section 6.6.1). The other necessity required for NMT engagement was the UCAN centre, a ‘one stop shop’ community space for local people to come and use the computers and access services. As the NMT discovered, this centre needs to be in the right geographical location to maximise the potential contact between staff and residents (section 6.1). Within Inquiry 1, the benefits of the UCAN for residents were highlighted (section 4.1.2) and how the model connects service development and delivery with engagement practice, rather than just asking residents to feedback on services (section 6.6.2). The NMT recognised that community development work to build relationships and develop groups is an effective way to ensure that engagement activities are successful (section 6.6.1). These findings add to the literature about the link between community engagement and community development in regeneration (section 2.1.4).

Secondly, the NMT found that that informal and creative outreach work was the best way to reach out to residents around Brightmet and work with specific individuals on certain issues (section 6.6.5). The NMT understood the value of arts-based engagement as a mechanism for community development, building relationships and having frank discussions with people about their health and wellbeing (for example Girls’ Group in section 6.6.1). The outcomes of arts-based activity delivered by the NMT, supports the findings in the literature about the positive impact of arts projects in regeneration in deprived areas, shown in section 2.1.

Thirdly, the model embraced an approach that was flexible and holistic and based on what residents and community groups were interested in, rather than specific targets set by Bolton at Home and other partners (section 6.6.2). Rather than the typical “crime and grime” focus of Neighbourhood Management as discussed in the literature (section 2.4.1), it also incorporated a wider range of issues to be addressed, particularly health, wellbeing, debt and poverty (section 6.6.4). The benefits of holistic interventions, determined by the requirements of specific neighbourhood needs, is acknowledged in other studies as contributing to the sustainability of regeneration initiatives, as cited by Colantonio *et al.* (2009) and Egan and ODPM (2004) and others in section 2.3. The NMT model also sought to address the related feelings of low self-worth, personal efficacy and a lack of confidence that many residents in Brightmet experienced (sections 4.1.2, 4.4.2) through the development of relationships with individuals so they could feel happier, gain a sense of purpose and meet others, as evidenced in section 6.6.2. By supporting both individuals as well as existing groups and facilitating the emergence of new ones through community

engagement and service delivery, findings showed that the NMT model connected to the theory of social change in deprived neighbourhoods proposed by Ling and Dale (2013). Through the articulation of the NMT model of transformative engagement, the research has explored how the process of involving local people could lead to sustainable regeneration outcomes and social change.

Finally, findings demonstrated that, in order to enact the NMT model of engagement practice, certain attributes were required within a team of practitioners, to work with local people in a deprived neighbourhood. These included passion, reflective thinking and a professional but informal approach. The NMT emphasised, during Inquiry Stream 3, that practitioners needed to display a level of passion to their work, organisation and area in which they are based, rather than coming in to 'just do a job' (section 6.6.3). Findings also suggest that both passion and patience are important to create and sustain motivation, especially when progress is slow when building relationships with individuals and groups (section 6.5). The importance of emotional resilience, risk taking and the ability to reflect were identified as necessary to engage in Brightmet, to try new activities, reflect on what worked and effectively deal with the complex and deep rooted problems residents experienced. Reflective learning has been recognised in literature as being of paramount importance to develop community engagement practice (Scottish Community Development Centre 2007b). A professional but informal approach required for the NMT model of practice was reliant on practitioners wearing their own clothes, rather than a uniform, so that they were not associated with an official agency. Findings suggested that this could help people to feel more at ease around them (section 6.6.3). Passion, patience, emotional resilience and risk taking are areas of practice rarely discussed in the literature about the necessary skills required to engage in deprived neighbourhoods (section 2.2.2). By broadening the discussion to include attributes required by practitioners, the research has explored the gap in knowledge about skill and practice development required by a housing association to implement a model of transformative engagement (gap 2).

7.2.1 Situating the Neighbourhood Management Team model in the literature

As discussed in section 2.1.2, Cornwall describes four types of participation as Nominal, Instrumental, Representative and Transformative. In this section, I compare the Neighbourhood Management Team (NMT) model of engagement with two types of engagement, Instrumental and Representative, as categorised by Cornwall (2008). I have

not included Nominal engagement in the discussion as I make the positive assumption that agencies are not using engagement for display purposes only. Instrumental engagement has a focus on efficiency, with a rationale that projects and services will be more cost effective as a result of community contributions. Representative engagement involves local people influencing management because it gives them a voice to shaping a project or service (Cornwall 2008). These more traditional methods of engagement practice, based on mechanisms such as surveys and meetings, achieved limited, if any, success in Brightmet, although may work better in a neighbourhood with a greater number of community groups and a more developed community infrastructure.

Transformative engagement according to Cornwall (2008) is a continuing dynamic where empowerment is both a means and an end and concerns the creation of invited spaces to enable people to make their own decisions so that people can decide and act for themselves. The NMT model of engagement can be most closely associated with this type of engagement as a continuing dynamic to achieve empowerment for residents to make their own decisions (sections 2.1.2, 2.7.1). I captured the overwhelming positive responses from residents engaged with the UCAN, Girls Group, TOB Together and Photographer in Residence and Mr One Million projects and the difference it had made to them, individually and collectively. Residents reported increases in confidence, skills, job readiness, improvements to health and wellbeing and the development of friendships and peer support (sections 4.1, 6.5). I argue this was because the NMT's approach was adaptive and reflexive and worked to achieve sustainability as people become more confident in their own ability to decide and act for themselves and work together, without the need for practitioners' support. The issues around monitoring and evaluation of the NMT model discussed in section 7.3 notwithstanding, it is not known if similar outcomes would have occurred from Instrumental or Representative Engagement practice.

Despite this assertion that the NMT model as a transformative model of engagement can lead to a greater likelihood of sustainability in regeneration, there are a number of questions that warrant further exploration. The model places much emphasis on the notion of developing people's sense of agency and social capital as a way to achieve economic, social and environmental change in a deprived neighbourhood. However, most neighbourhood regeneration initiatives fail when agencies do not link the local concerns to the macro forces and understand the interrelationship between individual, collective and

structural issues (section 2.3.5). Therefore, practitioners need to be wary of placing too much emphasis on the local aspects of transformative practice without a strong connection between how national and global influences can affect people's life chances in deprived areas.

Literature suggests there is an ill-considered theory of neighbourhood change in regeneration initiatives (Griggs *et al.* 2008) and the theory of social change embedded within the model of transformative community engagement could be subject to criticism. The NMT model of practice attempts to address individual's wellbeing, poverty, low levels of social capital through individual interaction and group development. But there are no guarantees or evidence to date that a transformative model like this will result in improvements to service delivery and economic, social or environmental change for people or places, or that these positive improvements can be sustained over a period of time, especially if funding is reduced. Despite this lack of substantive data to support the theory of change for the NMT model of engagement, other types of instrumental and representative engagement do not appear to offer empowering or sustainable outcomes from practice. Additionally, literature has argued that they fail to address deep-rooted issues in deprived neighbourhoods (section 2.3) and a transformative model of engagement may provide a more relevant and appropriate way of trying to achieve this goal in Breightmet. Despite questioning the limited evidence, the localised model of practice and the theory of neighbourhood change espoused by the NMT model, I argue that, through this type of engagement practice, more significant and sustained impacts on people and place are more likely.

7.3 Research Objective 3: Implications for implementing the NMT Model of Community Engagement Practice

Linking to the previous objective about the Neighbourhood Management Team's model of community engagement practice, the third research objective was to *explore the implications for practitioners and organisations in implementing the NMT model of community engagement practice*. There are four implications within this section, including the level of expenditure and staffing, support for practitioners, changes to organisational processes and evaluation frameworks required to implement the NMT model of practice.

Firstly, findings identified the level of expenditure and staffing required and recruitment issues as issues for organisations implementing the NMT model of engagement. Cumulatively, the entire team of eight practitioners plus a Neighbourhood Manager, the neighbourhood centre and the NMT budget, equates to a significant amount of expenditure for Bolton at Home. When, due to illness, the NMT were short-staffed, their capacity to undertake their model of practice was greatly reduced. Thus findings imply that if there are not sufficient numbers of staff in post, with the required specific roles, and dedicated budget and a neighbourhood centre, it may be extremely difficult for organisations to implement this model of practice. Organisations may also find it challenging to appoint people with commensurate attributes and values similar to other team members, who can create empowering processes for residents and have an ability to cope with the emotionally demanding nature of engagement. Despite adapting recruitment procedures, it still may be difficult for organisations to attract and keep the right calibre of practitioner with the suggested attributes at an expected level of salary, especially if the organisation has a limited budget for staff costs. These organisation development aspects are not well explored in the literature about Neighbourhood Management, Regeneration or Community Engagement and require further investigation.

Secondly, the NMT model of engagement is highly sensitive to changes in the environment and the type of issues residents' experience. The NMT experienced more demand for their services at the UCAN since moving location and saw that the level of need was increasing, particularly on the issues of debt, food, employment and welfare (sections 6.1.2, 6.6.1, 6.7.1). As the successful implementation of the model depends on staff members engaging with local people, often on a one-to-one basis, to understand their needs and jointly determine actions with residents, it was becoming more challenging for staff to devote the necessary time to each individual. In addition, the NMT encountered more people who were experiencing anxiety and desperation about their circumstances, which meant that, as well as more demand for their time, staff were dealing with more emotionally demanding situations and in some instances had concerns for their safety (section 6.6.3). This reflects the situation described in the Inside Housing article where housing officers were regularly meeting people who were suicidal (Stockdale, 2014). Asking for advice and having the time and space to deal with emotionally difficult issues is essential, as highlighted in the literature, when "responding to need in the poorest of our communities can feel overwhelming" (Ledwith 1997: 96). Therefore organisations undertaking community engagement must ensure that practitioners have appropriate support in place to highlight

any individuals at risk and have opportunity to talk through the challenging situations they experience. This, findings suggest, has increased importance for practitioners who are undertaking more informal, in-depth and person-centred approaches to engagement, like the NMT, who are likely to be seriously affected by the increased demands and issues people are seeking help with.

Thirdly, continual changes to organisational strategy and processes must occur in order to successfully implement the NMT model of engagement. At both strategic and operational levels, Bolton at Home has shown how organisations must operate in a different way to a dominant top-down model of involvement and service delivery. This is so management and reporting structures can enable practitioners to work in an autonomous and flexible way (section 6.7.2). This necessitates a high level of trust given by senior managers to the NMT and this can create empowerment of staff to enable practice to develop in ways they see fit and that respond to the local environment. This freedom to innovate and deliver a more flexible model of engagement carries significant reputational and financial risk to organisations as some engagement activity may result in criticisms of partners or the organisation and lead to negative press coverage in the media (sections 6.6.3, 6.6.5). It is important that senior managers are aware of these risks and happy to accept any potentially negative consequences from unforeseen outcomes of engagement. Within the literature, identifying the level of risk for organisations with engagement activity and how to adapt organisational processes to provide the necessary level of autonomy and flexibility to practitioners is rarely discussed. This, I suggest, is an area for future exploration.

Finally, organisations seeking to implement the NMT model will be concerned that results may not be immediately forthcoming. This is because despite the large amount of expenditure required to create a team, a facility and the engagement activity, the impact may be on a small scale at first and take time to develop. This means organisations may be unable to see the return on this investment for months, or even years, which presents a challenge to public sector agencies in chastened times to justify longer-term approaches. The outcomes of engagement, on both an individual and collective basis, are highly subjective, difficult to capture and attempts will need to be made to disaggregate engagement activities from other services and support accessed by residents. As engagement with this model is based on numerous interactions, monitoring and evaluation of practice, the NMT proposed, is best done on a team basis using a journey mapping framework. Another challenging aspect of monitoring and evaluating the model is that by

the very nature of a transformative process to create opportunities and an environment for empowerment, any credit for a change in someone's life should lie with them and not with practitioners. However, these challenges do not mean that work to determine the quality and impact of the NMT model of engagement should be avoided. Discussion of the issues with monitoring and evaluating the NMT model echo other studies that explore the difficulties in establishing the value of engagement (section 2.3.4). In summary, the model requires the implementation of appropriate evaluation frameworks to make a realistic assessment of whether engagement activity has provided value for money, improved service delivery and what impact has been had on individuals, groups and the neighbourhood over the short and long-term.

7.4 Research Objective 4: Implications for Bolton at Home and Housing Associations Undertaking Community Engagement in Regeneration

The fourth research objective situated the research in the broader context and was to *analyse the strategic implications for Bolton at Home and other UK housing associations in seeking to engage the community in regeneration activities and projects*. This objective was fulfilled by Inquiry Stream 2 with senior managers that explored the development of community engagement strategy and Bolton at Home's role in regeneration. Other relevant findings came from Inquiry Stream 3, with the Neighbourhood Management Team, regarding the increasing demand for services, relationship between partner agencies and the need to link strategic and operational aspects of engagement. Findings indicate there are three significant issues that Bolton at Home and other housing associations should consider when undertaking community engagement in regeneration and these are discussed, with reference to literature, in this section. They include the increased level of need and reduced funding for partners, the identification of two types of engagement approach and the potentially conflicting roles of housing associations in regeneration.

Firstly, findings showed there is an increasing level of need for support offered by Bolton at Home in deprived neighbourhoods because people are experiencing more financial hardship due to changes to welfare benefits, the effects of the economic downturn and the impact of cuts to public services (sections 5.4.1 and 6.7.1). Residents were referred to the UCAN centres from other agencies such as the Job Centre, who lacked the capacity to help residents with CV writing, applying for jobs and accessing the online job match systems (Fox 2010a). Connected to this growing demand for support, the findings show that

Bolton at Home's neighbourhood management model was under increasing pressure as partners had their budgets cut. The research found there was a limited number of services specifically delivered in Brightmet before 2010 and these had been further reduced by cuts to the National Health Service, the Police and Council services (section 6.7.1). Bolton at Home's most significant partner Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council experienced 40% cuts to expenditure, from 2010 onwards, which has resulted in the reduction or removal of many services and funding to support the community and voluntary sector (section 1.3). As a result, Bolton at Home was, according to the NMT, expected to lead, fund and deliver more services and engagement activity by other service providers (sections 5.4.1 and 6.7.1). The implication for Bolton at Home was that there were few partners who could offer services, staff and/or financial resources to assist in regeneration projects and engage with residents in Brightmet. This meant that the Bolton at Home had to take a leading role in the funding, development and delivery of services and engagement activity, rather than a coordinating one, as originally intended. The concern expressed by the NMT in Inquiry Stream 2 was that Bolton at Home would be, increasingly, expected to 'fill the gap' in both provision and support in deprived areas by other service providers (section 6.7.1). The findings suggest that housing associations like Bolton at Home will be expected more and more, to extend their community investor role in neighbourhoods to provide services and support to residents that go above and beyond social housing provision. As the reduction to local government expenditure continues, the decreasing amount and quality of neighbourhood service provision is likely to have a substantial impact on the capacity of staff and organisations like Bolton at Home to help people. As cited in 2.1.6, the material circumstances of poorer people can present barriers to engagement, so these changes could further undermine housing associations' attempts to engage with residents. In addition, engagement practice like NMT's are resource and time intensive so trying to implement models like this in the current context is extremely challenging. Literature has tended to focus on the impact of the cuts on local government provision (Hastings, Bailey, Besemer, Bramley, Gannon, and Watkins 2013) rather than extra demand placed on housing associations for regeneration activity, service delivery and community engagement, so the research findings explore further the gaps in knowledge about the role of Housing Associations in Neighbourhood Management (gap 4) and community engagement undertaken by a Housing Association using a Neighbourhood Management framework (gap 5).

Secondly, the identification of two different approaches to engagement Consumerist and Participatory was presented in Inquiry Stream 2 (section 5.4.7) and addresses a gap in knowledge about the development of community engagement strategy for housing associations (gap 4). The findings showed there was agreement between Bolton at Home senior managers about the role of organisation in regeneration (section 5.4.1), but a lack of consensus existed about how and what community engagement should achieve for both organisation and residents (section 5.4.4). It must be noted tension between operational teams about engagement was discussed by two senior managers, but was not a significant theme from the findings in Inquiry Stream 2, despite being strongly articulated by Housing Staff and the NMT as a problem (sections 5.1.1 and 6.7.2). Identifying and linking consumerist and participatory engagement approaches at a strategic level is likely to become more important for housing associations as Universal Credit starts to take effect. These changes to people's benefits could mean that the distinction between staff within Enforcement positions (such as Income Management) and colleagues in development and enabling roles to support vulnerable tenants may be further polarised due to an increasing pressure to collect income. This is relevant for all housing associations, but is crucial for an organisation like Bolton at Home given their strong commitment to tackling social, economic and physical issues in deprived neighbourhoods where they have housing stock (Bolton at Home 2010). In future, a greater role for independent and objective organisations may develop to undertake participatory approaches to community engagement and support to residents in deprived areas. This is because housing associations may be viewed by residents as having a vested interest and only concerned with collecting rent, despite an organisation's best intentions to support residents and deliver sustainable regeneration outcomes.

Finally, housing associations undertaking community engagement in regeneration may need to consider the conflicting roles they undertake in deprived areas and how they explain the different purposes of engagement to residents. Findings revealed the divide between the functions of Bolton at Home as landlord and as 'community investor' (sections 5.1.1, 6.4.1, 6.7.2). The landlord role is required to adopt a consumerist approach that is, organisationally-focused to enforce conditions in tenancies, collect rent and protect the business. However, when the same housing association carries out its community investor function in regeneration, it may use a participatory strategy to engagement to develop relationships with residents on their terms, using an enabling and empowering

process. As a consequence, from the resident perspective, the housing association might be viewed as adopting two seemingly incompatible roles as both ‘enforcer’ and ‘enabler’. For this reason, the NMT indicated that not being associated with Bolton at Home was beneficial as it provided freedom to engage with local people in Breightmet without the label of landlord or enforcer (section 6.6.3). This was confirmed in Inquiry Stream 1, where a resident reported their dislike of Bolton at Home Customer Involvement and Housing staff, and viewed the NMT as distant from the organisation and in a more positive light (section 4.4.3). Housing associations undertaking community engagement in regeneration will need to express these differences to residents and address the potential confusion that might arise from conflicting roles of ‘enforcer’ and ‘enabler’. These findings further explore the gaps in knowledge about the housing association role in neighbourhood management (gap 4) and community engagement undertaken by a Housing Association using a Neighbourhood Management framework (gap 5).

7.5 Research Objective 5: Examination of the Research Outcomes

The final research objective was to explore *the extent to which the research has helped to develop organisational community engagement strategy and practice and enable the voices of residents to be heard*. This research objective also relates to methodological considerations highlighted in sections 3.4 and 3.5.5 as the value of action research is said to be based on whether the action outcomes result in significant practical improvement and enduring consequence for the participants (Reason and Bradbury 2001). I assess the outcomes achieved by the three interlinked Inquiry Streams in those terms.

7.5.1 Inquiry Stream 1

My involvement with the UCAN Centre Review discussed in the Pre-Step of Inquiry Stream 1, enabled resident and operational staff perspectives to be heard by senior managers. This influenced strategic decision making about the centre and resources required to develop services (section 5.1.4). In addition, the residents’ stories from the Users Evaluation (Fox 2010a) featured in Bolton at Home’s Social Value Assessment 2013 (Bolton at Home 2013). Although Inquiry Stream 1 did not have as much in-depth participation as I originally intended, the inquiry stream did present important perspectives from some residents in Breightmet.

The Residents' Inquiry Stream demonstrated the importance of asking residents about engagement and their views about why they thought that local people in Breightmet were reluctant to become involved with the NMT (sections 4.1, 4.4, and 4.5). The Residents' lived experience served as an important method of comparing the perspectives held by Bolton at Home staff and residents about service providers and the local context. These insights from residents enabled the NMT to reflect upon the implications of the research findings for their practice. The resident perspective is vital in community engagement and one, I argue that should be further explored and articulated in regeneration research (section 3.4.1).

7.5.2 Inquiry Stream 2

Inquiry Stream 2 focused on developing community engagement strategy with Bolton at Home senior managers as enhancing Bolton at Home's Community Engagement Strategy was a significant priority for senior managers to ensure that the regeneration activity had sustainable outcomes (conversation with senior manager 05.05.10). Following interviews, conceptual mapping and dissemination of a report of the findings (Fox 2012), Bolton at Home's Community Engagement Strategy was revised. The latest version accommodates different types of engagement used by Bolton at Home staff to involve tenants, residents and communities in Bolton (section 5.5). Positive feedback was received from senior managers about the research and the value of the Consumerist and Participatory Framework for analysing community engagement, as shown by this quote,

You made things completely different in terms of the participatory and consumerist framework - that is the way forward now in the organisation (senior manager conversation 29.02.12).

7.5.3 Inquiry Stream 3

For the NMT, it was essential that community engagement was transformative in nature and had lasting impact, addressing the complex issues that people had and improving the neighbourhood (section 6.5.2). By creating space and a process for them, individually and collectively, to reflect on their approach to community engagement practice, they were able to identify challenges to effective engagement and agree on possible ways to overcome them (section 6.6). The NMT created a new research inquiry about the monitoring and evaluation of their practice to develop an evaluation framework for their model of engagement (section 6.8). The process created as a result of this Inquiry Stream

to capture the interactions between residents and the NMT, is still being undertaken, on a monthly basis, to inform services and engagement activity (conversation with member of NMT 01.08.14).

As with community engagement, it is complicated to evaluate the impact of action research over the longer term (Marshall *et al.* 2011). This is especially true if the results need to “become properly embedded in wider organisational systems, practice and cultures” (Davies, Nutley and Walter 2007: 233). The importance of working to a larger scale and to embed change, will always represent a challenge for action researchers working in, and sponsored by, organisations, and with residents in deprived neighbourhoods who have complex issues to address. However, the research did achieve the objectives of developing community engagement strategy and practice and also provided a way for voices of residents to be heard by Bolton at Home staff. All three Inquiry Streams were participative to varying degrees. Although it would have been beneficial if staff and residents had more ownership of the research process, I acknowledge it is a constant challenge to achieve more and better quality participation in practice (as discussed in section 3.5.4). I have articulated the outcomes of the research for Bolton at Home in terms of the development of strategy and practice, although it is very difficult to judge if these change efforts will have an emerging and enduring consequence (Reason and Bradbury 2001). Overall, I feel proud of both the process and the outcomes of the research and the choices I made given the context, participants and values of action research (outlined in sections 3.5 and 3.6). I would like to think that my contribution can be summarised by these comments from two of the Neighbourhood Management Team:

I have ordered my Tempered Radical book and will be reading it soon. It's so useful having time with you to look at things like that...I don't know what I'll do when you're gone! (Team member 29.04.12 email correspondence)

It [the research] has given the organisation a framework for how it does things, that's massive...I don't think you realise what impact you've had. You've solidified everything. Everything has come together like it was meant to be and the conversations we have about community engagement are different (Team member interview 10.10.12).

7.6 Summary of the Discussion chapter

Research Objective 1 characterised the lived experience of residents and identified five implications for practitioners engaging in Brightmet. Firstly, the small number of community groups presented capacity issues for existing volunteers and the Brightmet puzzle was challenging for the NMT to establish why residents were not engaging. Secondly, barriers to engagement were identified, particularly day-to-day struggles of residents and Rational Choice Theory was presented as offering an explanation as to why Brightmet residents chose not to engage with the NMT and other service providers. Thirdly, a lack of trust towards service providers was identified and an area for development by agencies looking to engage in Brightmet. Fourthly the impact of past regeneration schemes in the neighbourhood and how they could influence engagement was discussed. Finally the importance of family and social connections was demonstrated as a way to address stigma and strengthen levels of attachment residents felt towards Brightmet and each other.

Research Objective 2 conceptualised the NMT model of engagement practice and the key aspects discussed were roles and facilities, informal outreach, holistic approach to tackle health and poverty and practitioner attributes. The model was situated within Cornwall's (2008) typology of participation and was found to be closely aligned with transformative engagement. The implications for implementing this model of engagement were identified to fulfil *Research Objective 3* and consisted of the level of expenditure and staffing, support for practitioners, changes to organisational processes and evaluation frameworks required to assess the impact of the NMT mode. The gap in knowledge was further explored about identifying the skills and practice needed for transformative community engagement by a housing association in a neighbourhood management context (gap 2).

Research Objective 4 was fulfilled by a discussion about the significant issues that Bolton at Home and other housing associations should consider when undertaking community engagement in regeneration. They included the increased level of need in deprived neighbourhoods, reduced funding for partners and the identification of two types of engagement approach. In addition, the potentially conflicting roles of enforcer and enabler were discussed that have implications for housing associations undertaking regeneration. The research further explored gaps in knowledge about the role of housing associations in neighbourhood management (gap 4) and community engagement undertaken by a housing association using neighbourhood management (gap 5).

Research Objective 5 examined the extent to which the action outcomes from the three Inquiry Streams resulted in significant practical improvement and enduring consequence for the participants. The research did enable the development of community engagement strategy and practice and also provided a way for voices of residents to be heard by Bolton at Home staff.

The conclusion chapter will discuss my contribution to knowledge and how the research has addressed gaps in knowledge about transformative engagement and development of community engagement strategy for housing associations (gaps 1 and 3). It also provides an account of the benefits of the approach undertaken to examine the development of community engagement for regeneration and the limitations of it. Recommendations for practitioners and housing associations wishing to engage residents in deprived neighbourhood are provided, along with areas for future research exploration.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

In this section, I discuss how I have fulfilled the aim to provide a critical examination of community engagement through the development of strategy and practice at Bolton at Home. The contribution to academic and practical knowledge in the field of community engagement in regeneration will be identified and discussed. Recommendations for practitioners and organisations seeking to develop engagement strategy and achieve sustainable regeneration through transformative engagement are provided. Finally, I examine the benefits and limitations to the approach undertaken and, lastly, areas of future research are suggested.

8.1 Contribution to Knowledge

As discussed in section 3.2 my contribution to knowledge is based on propositional, experiential and practical ways of knowing, following Heron's (1996) extended epistemology. The main motivation for the research was to generate knowledge collaboratively that would be of value to Brightmet residents, the Neighbourhood Management Team, Bolton at Home and other housing associations and academia. Rather than propose that organisations undertake prescriptive approaches to developing community engagement without considering the local context, I wish to recommend suggestions that could be adopted by practitioners and applied as they see fit to meet the needs of residents living in deprived neighbourhoods. My intention is that the learning and findings gained from this research may have transcontextual credibility beyond Bolton at Home to other housing associations and regeneration initiatives, as discussed in section 3.5.6. I argue that this thesis has demonstrated the following contribution to knowledge:

1. A new adaptation of Andrews and Turner's (2006) Consumerist and Participatory framework to analyse engagement in a housing association context;
2. A model of transformative community engagement practice for sustainable regeneration.

8.1.1 A new adaptation of Andrews and Turner's (2006) Consumerist and Participatory Framework in a housing association context

My adaptation of Andrews and Turner's (2006) framework enables housing associations to analyse their engagement approach (see section 5.4.7). As previously discussed, the research findings fulfilled Research Objective 4, about the implications for housing associations undertaking community engagement in regeneration (7.4). The Consumerist and Participatory Framework was successfully applied to Bolton at Home's context to analyse engagement and used by them to develop a new organisational strategy document, as detailed in 5.4.8. Few academic studies or practice-based reports have explored the development of community engagement strategy within a housing association context to respond to the challenges of delivering neighbourhood regeneration (gap 3), so the adaptation of this framework (Table 10) addresses this gap and represents a contribution to knowledge in this area.

The framework can be useful for researchers and housing associations to explore the complex nature of engagement, service delivery and partnership working in regeneration. In addition, it enables practitioners to focus on how strategy and practice can be further developed and consider how the value of each engagement approach can be assessed. If these approaches are not identified or links between them are not formed, there is a danger that the effectiveness and efficacy of both approaches will be undermined and their impact on neighbourhood regeneration outcomes will be severely limited.

	Consumerist	Participatory
Aim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication and consultation about consumption of services. • Guides operational service delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aligned with community development practice, focus on inequality, poverty, social justice. Based on what local people want, on their terms when they want it. The HA's role is to facilitate, support and enable people.
Audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenant and leaseholder 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All those living in a given neighbourhood and service providers
Character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Top down, structured, formal linked to service objectives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bottom up, time consuming, complex, intangible, unstructured • Engagement is both product and process, there is equal value in both

Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increases the quality and use of customer information by managers Satisfies regulatory requirements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develops an empowering process that enhances confidence, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and increases wellbeing and social capital.
Level of commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Different levels can range from receiving information to Board membership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires substantial time, resource and commitment from HAs.
Format	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surveys, meetings, constituted tenants and residents associations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Different types of method/s for different audiences. Could be group work, one to one relationships, development of networks of community groups, flexible service delivery.
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer Scrutiny groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Development practice, art-based projects
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quantitative and description of output Numbers attended, changes to service. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualitative, use of narratives, outcomes, impact on individual or group's life opportunities and neighbourhood.

Table 10 Consumerist and Participatory Framework for the analysis of community engagement in a housing association context (Adapted from Andrews and Turner 2006)

The framework offers value to Housing Associations looking to develop engagement strategy and practice for regeneration because it can help them to identify engagement types undertaken by the HA and other service providers, in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. By doing so, the differences about the purpose and concept of engagement practice can be articulated and addressed, ensuring stronger connections between both approaches and strategic thinking and operational practice. It is vital that frontline staff, engaging with residents, have a clear conception of the aim and process of engagement. This will prevent confusion and tension between departments of the same organisation but also among partners. Crucially, this reiteration of the function of engagement and the different approaches helps to manage the expectation of residents and provide clarity if two teams from the same organisation are behaving towards them in different ways. HAs may feel increased pressure to fill the gap in neighbourhood services and engagement activity from other agencies, expanding their role to go beyond housing provider, as public sector cuts continue to impact deprived neighbourhoods. The framework will allow HAs to balance the functions of landlord and 'community investor' in a regeneration context, and to assist

with the development of a strategic vision for the HA about its relationship to residents and approaches to engagement. As shown with Bolton at Home, the framework also helped to produce appropriate strategy documentation for staff and residents about engagement and highlighted the importance of creating evaluation processes to identify measures of success for each approach (7.4).

8.1.2 Criticisms of the Consumerist and Participatory framework

This section discusses three criticisms related to the framework and issues with implementation by a housing association (HA). Firstly, the framework does not differentiate engagement with customer service or marketing activity of a HA, so the relationship between the core business of the organisation, the activities associated with getting feedback about services and undertaking activity connected with a ‘community investor’ role (Slattery 2001) may not be clear. It could also be difficult for HAs to identify which approach is used within their organisation or partners as many service providers would claim to adopt participatory ways of working with users and residents but, on closer inspection, this may not be the case.

Secondly, some HAs may only use a consumerist engagement approach (as shown by some HA strategy documents in 2.2.3) to their regeneration initiatives. There is, however a danger that, if HAs only focus on Consumerist engagement, increasing organisational efficiency becomes “disengaged from the broader goals within local communities” (Andrews and Turner 2006: 381). In addition, the majority of tenants or ‘usual suspects’ involved in consumerist approaches, such as Tenants and Residents Associations, are in an older age bracket than residents who do not engage (May 2007). This means that HAs may need to use different mechanisms of engagement to attract younger tenants and other minority groups to provide feedback on services and seek more representative views.

Finally, Management Teams of HAs could experience pressure from their board, residents and/or social housing regulator, the Homes and Communities Agency, to adopt more traditional modes of engagement as seen in consumerist approaches. Indeed, staff and stakeholders of HAs may feel more comfortable pursuing consumerist approaches, rather than take risks on untested, time consuming and expensive models of participatory engagement. They may, at the very least, need more justification regarding the costs, outcomes and value for money, to achieve a wider variety of individual, collective and area-wide outcomes by working directly with residents, across a neighbourhood and not just tenants.

8.1.3 A model of transformative community engagement practice for sustainable regeneration

I produced a model of transformative community engagement practice for sustainable regeneration following analysis of the NMT findings about the conceptualisation of their model of practice (Research Objectives 2 and 3). The model I have created identifies a number of important components for transformative engagement practice that I argue contributes to social, economic and physical regeneration in deprived neighbourhoods and could result in sustainable improvements for people and places. Any model necessitates a simplification of all aspects, but this one is not intended to be a ‘one size fits all’ approach, but provides suggestions for practice. The model includes the following aspects, the role of practitioners, community development practice, empowerment with an individual and group focus, service delivery and organisation change and practice development (Table 11). The model is a contribution to knowledge because it addresses the gap in the literature about Transformative Community Engagement Practice (gap 1).

Aspects of the model	Explanation
1. Role of practitioners as enablers in deprived neighbourhoods Literature: 2.5.3, 2.7.2 Findings in 5.4, 6.6.2, 6.6.3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practitioners move beyond a service delivery interaction with residents by establishing relationships with residents that are concerned with providing support and positive encouragement and where they are agents of change. • Residents are not viewed as ‘passive recipients’ but rather people with a self-determinism and a self-reliance that needs to be nurtured through the creation of empowering spaces and processes. • Residents’ choices (especially about whether to engage) are recognised and respected.
2. Critical community development practice Literature: 2.5.3, 2.7.4 Findings in 6.6.1, 6.6.2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A critical stance to community development is adopted where practitioners use community development values to guide their practice. • The goal of practice is to work with groups to achieve social justice, equality, democracy and political change through a critical pedagogy and collective action. • A bottom-up approach undertaken to this work with residents helps them become aware of how structural factors and government policy influence their lives.

<p>3. Empowerment with an individual and group focus</p> <p>Literature: 2.3, 2.3.2, 2.5.3, 2.7.</p> <p>Findings: 6.6</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The theory of empowerment in the model is that all individuals have power and agency and it is a matter of ensuring that people know this and find ways for them to gain more control over their lives. • This is strongly connected to an individual's sense of power and the amount of efficiency, positive wellbeing and confidence they have. • Practitioners need to work with residents to develop all these areas. • Practitioners working with residents on a group and neighbourhood-wide basis need to create spaces and processes so that networks and support can develop that are not reliant on external organisations.
<p>4. Responsive service delivery</p> <p>Literature: 2.1.4, 2.3.1 2.3.3.</p> <p>Findings: 4.4.3, 7.1.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HAs need to ensure neighbourhood- based services are responsive to the needs of residents in the area. • In order to build trust and gain feedback about the quality of, and access to, services, providers must become more 'person-centred' in their approach and consider the impact of current methods of delivery on residents. • With emphasis on holistic and integrated thinking in the development and delivery of services by providers and partnerships, engagement can address local needs in a more systematic and effective way.
<p>5. Organisation change and practice development</p> <p>Findings and Discussion: 6.7.2, 7.2, 7.3, 7.5.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisational change and practice development needs to occur in housing associations to undertake the other aspects of the model. • From strategic level thinking down to frontline operations, each part of an organisation involved with a regeneration initiative needs to adapt to suit the requirements needed to engage in this way. • Engagement practitioners must have adequate resources, support and autonomy to feel empowered that they can make a difference and this translates into working in a deprived area. • Practice is creative, innovative, reflective and involves taking risks and working in new ways to engage and inspire residents. • An evaluation framework to establish the value of practice according to the context and the perceived measures of success, according to both staff and residents, is vital to ensure that engagement activity creates regeneration that has a sustainable impact.

Table 11 Model of Transformative Engagement for Sustainable Regeneration

8.1.4 Criticisms of the transformative engagement model

The following three criticisms can be directed towards this transformative model for sustainable engagement. Firstly, it could be argued that critical community development cannot be ‘co-opted’ into organisation-based activity and service delivery and that it is impossible to reconcile ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ activity. As organisations are the powerful institutions in regeneration initiatives, to suggest that they can be responsible for creating critical spaces (that may involve criticisms of the organisation and its staff) without vested interests may be naive at best. However, the majority of community development workers will be employed by an organisation and rarely independent practitioners solely answerable to the community in which they work. Indeed, one of the conflicting aspects to the role of a community development practitioner is the need to work ‘in and against the state’ (Ledwith 2011) meaning that, in order to create change in neighbourhoods, practitioners must use every available resource and avenue at their disposal to support the needs of local people. In addition, some organisations like Bolton at Home are comfortable with taking risks with engagement activity and happy to accept the potentially negative consequences that could result from residents feeling more empowered.

Secondly, as acknowledged, regeneration and community action rarely occurs in disadvantaged neighbourhoods without external assistance. Resources and practitioners are required to act as a catalyst; hopefully, in a direction that local people have decided or to which they have agreed. Yet the empowerment paradox (Gruber and Trickett 1987) identifies that the powerful (organisations) must undermine their own power to enable the powerless (residents) to become more powerful (section 2.5.3). If regeneration initiatives are always externally driven and dependent, in the first instance, on service providers to create transformative processes, there will be a danger that these mechanisms will continue to be owned and managed by organisations, beyond the initial start-up, despite intention and rhetoric to the contrary.

This leads to the third critique of this model of engagement and, indeed, all models of practice that attempt to involve residents in change processes leading to sustainable outcomes. To what extent can any model of neighbourhood based regeneration, no matter how transformative the engagement practice ever lead to substantial change at a local level when structural global and national forces have more of an impact on deprived areas? There may be little realistic opportunity of making a difference beyond a handful of

individuals and undertaking some physical or environmental improvements. Nevertheless, I do not believe that these critiques provide reason enough to suggest that efforts to engage with residents or work to improve disadvantaged areas should not take place.

Next, I discuss the wider implication of the research about the future role of UK housing associations delivering regeneration and seeking to engage residents in deprived neighbourhoods.

8.2 The Future Role of Housing Associations in Neighbourhood Regeneration

The wider implication of this research that needs to be considered is the future role of housing associations in neighbourhood regeneration and local service delivery. As shown in the Introduction chapter, neighbourhood regeneration has disappeared from the policy agenda of the current government (Crowley *et al.* 2012). This has meant that there is little national funding available for local authorities and housing associations and previous mechanisms to deliver regeneration such as neighbourhood management have all but disappeared at a local level. The research has demonstrated that in neighbourhoods like Brightmet, with a weak voluntary sector and community infrastructure, regeneration will not just happen naturally; it will need external support or funding (Davies and Pill 2012). To suggest that the private sector will take the lead in regeneration efforts in a predominately residential area that has such low average income is misleading as recognised by Taylor (1995).

Regenerating estates, and especially tackling poverty and unemployment requires strong national and regional policy frameworks. It cannot be left to the market (Taylor 1995a: 6).

Findings have shown that neighbourhood regeneration initiatives to develop wellbeing, improve people's economic fortunes and address complex needs and poverty, are needed now more than ever before (6.7.1). I agree with those who contend that state-funded initiatives through local government or housing associations are needed to support individuals and families living in deprived areas and that for regeneration, "a strongly interventionist state of some kind is essential" (Davies and Pill 2012: 198). However, as a consequence of local government cuts and Welfare Reform, there has been increasing

demand for help and less agency capacity to provide it (section 7.4). One strategy employed by many local councils has been ‘entrenchment’, to vastly reduce the role of local government, withdrawal from the provision of a range of service areas and commission others to deliver services (Hastings *et al.* 2013). This transfer of responsibility for some services and client groups to other agencies, sectors and partnerships can be seen with the shift in emphasis of Bolton at Home as coordinator of neighbourhood management partnerships to funder and deliverer (section 7.4). Housing associations have growing expectations from partner agencies that they will have the capacity and resource to be able to fill the gaps in service provision or at least lessen the pressure on other services. This can be seen with HAs taking more responsibility for economic development and job creation, health and social care services, supported housing, and independent living services (for example, in West Salford). Some HAs have embraced this expansion of their community investor role and have the finances to be able to buy community assets such as a local newspaper and an academy school (New Charter Housing Trust Group 2010).

There are two concerns that need to be raised regarding the future role of HAs in regeneration and service delivery. Firstly, as indicated in Inquiry Stream 1, residents were confused about the distinction between Bolton at Home’s role and the responsibilities of Bolton Council (section 4.4.4). Both organisations were referred to, interchangeably, by residents, in a similar way as reported by Mathers *et al.* (2008) where residents were not willing or able, to distinguish between a regeneration initiative and other service providers. It is difficult for residents to know who is accountable for what especially if one agency has contracted out work to another provider and, more importantly, who to complain to if the quality of service does not meet their expectations. There is potential for a lack of accountability and coordination resulting in avoidance of responsibility and a ‘that’s not my job’ mentality from some service providers. Related to issues of accountability, there is a danger that HAs could take on statutory responsibilities of local government, the health service and the police and this could undermine the legal obligations of these public sector institutions. This lack of clarity about the role of service providers carries implications for engagement, service access, trust and accountability and will require scrutiny, as further local government cuts take effect.

Secondly, significant attention must be paid to the amount of capacity that HAs have, to go beyond a landlord role and take responsibility, for addressing a wider range of needs and delivering more services at a neighbourhood level. As rental income and government grants for developing new homes becomes less certain, HAs need to prioritise their expenditure to focus on the activity that will produce the most important gains for the business, tenants and the wider neighbourhood. Also, there is pressure from the social housing regulator, the Homes and Communities Agency, to demonstrate how the HA is providing value for money and demonstrating the social value that results from service delivery. This means HAs are trying to find new ways to establish the value of activities as community investors and are keen to direct funds to projects and services with clear justifiable outcomes and identified financial impact on tenants and the business.

Many housing associations are significant players at a local level and can be a source of stability and also a catalyst for improvement in neighbourhoods. They have unprecedented access to large numbers of residents and because most are geographically concentrated, are well placed to take the lead in regeneration initiatives in the absence of national programmes. Community engagement to support regeneration undertaken by HAs should provide a range of options but should go beyond a tenant focus if a lasting difference is to be made in mixed tenured neighbourhoods.

8.3 Benefits and Limitations of the Research

The benefits of the research were that both academic knowledge and practical outcomes were achieved to capture the lived experience of residents and develop engagement strategy and practice. Propositional knowledge based on experiential and practical ways of knowing has led to the Consumerist and Participatory Engagement Framework and a Model of Transformative Engagement Practice for Sustainable Regeneration. It is hoped that organisations and practitioners in other neighbourhoods and organisations can find elements of the model of transformative community engagement transferable to their own context and valuable for the development of their own strategy and practice.

The limitations of the research were that the participants were confined to the small number of self-selecting residents and did not include a partner perspective which is important within a neighbourhood management model of regeneration. Due to the time-limited nature of the research, it was not possible to thoroughly explore the wider change

efforts achieved by the Neighbourhood Management Team's practice or ways to evaluate the model of transformative engagement. Another limitation of the research is that the majority of local authorities that previously used neighbourhood management have drastically reduced the scope of the model or removed it completely, so this frame of reference for regeneration may not be as relevant to other parts of the UK as it was five years ago.

8.4 Further Research Possibilities

The research has identified three future research possibilities. Firstly organisation development aspects required for engagement including recruitment and support of staff, changes to organisational processes, reporting mechanisms and management structures to enable the development of engagement practice that carries more risk. Secondly, the longer term impact of transformative models of engagement need to be investigated to establish the extent to which this type of engagement practice is sustainable and how the various issues in deprived neighbourhoods have been addressed, if at all. Finally work to evaluate the impact of engagement in light of organisational responses to welfare reform, such as debt advice services and worklessness activity, to establish neighbourhood priorities and the social value of activities may be welcomed by many UK housing associations.

8.5 Summary of the Conclusion chapter

The overall aim of the research was to examine community engagement in regeneration by Bolton at Home, a UK Housing Association. The aim has been achieved by the creation of three Inquiry Streams to produce both organisational and resident perspectives and explore the development of community engagement strategy and practice and capture the lived experience of residents in a deprived neighbourhood. The research has contributed to the body of literature about community engagement in regeneration, an area of policy and research that has significance around the world. It has further explored gaps in knowledge about identifying and developing skills for transformative engagement practice in neighbourhood management for housing association staff, the role of housing associations in neighbourhood management and housing associations undertaking community engagement in neighbourhood management. In the discussion of the findings and

literature, I demonstrated how the five research objectives were fulfilled. These were to characterise the lived experience of residents, conceptualise the Neighbourhood Management Team model of practice and detail the implications for organisations implementing this model. The considerations for housing associations undertaking community engagement were explored and the outcomes achieved by this research and use of action research were discussed.

My contribution to knowledge is an adaptation of the Consumerist and Participatory Framework as an analysis of engagement for housing association strategy and a new model of transformative engagement practice for sustainable regeneration. This has addressed gaps in knowledge about the development of engagement strategy for housing associations and investigation into transformative community engagement. My argument is that compared to other types of engagement practice, transformative engagement may offer the greatest opportunity for housing associations and other service providers to make a significant and sustained impact on the lives of residents living in disadvantaged areas. This is of particular relevance given the current context of UK public sector cuts, economic recession and welfare benefit changes. Given the increasing demand for support and services offered by housing associations, I argue that the need to develop transformative engagement for sustainable regeneration in deprived neighbourhoods is more important than ever.

Chapter 9 Critical Summary

The aim of this final chapter is to provide a critical summary of the work and thesis presented. It incorporates theoretical and methodological perspectives and expands upon the theoretical contribution to knowledge. I reflect back on the process and provide an account of the lessons learnt as a result of undertaking the research. This section includes the following topics in need of further discussion:

1. Development of the Consumerist and Participatory Framework;
2. Critical analysis of the language positions adopted;
3. Theoretical work undertaken but not yet discussed;
4. Critique of the blended action research approach;
5. Clarification of my epistemological position;
6. Lessons learnt from undertaking the research.

9.1 Development of the Consumerist and Participatory Framework

This section discusses how the Consumerist and Participatory Framework by Andrews and Turner (2006) was used in the development of the research and, later, how the framework encouraged reflection with other Housing Associations. I found ideas about the identification of different community engagement types in a local democracy context within Andrews and Turner's (2006) paper. Then, I extended their thinking, to create a framework that applied to a social housing context to explore community engagement in regeneration. It was during the Senior Managers' inquiry stream literature review that I discovered Andrews and Turner's work and realised the value in categorising the different perspectives on community engagement, shown in the concept maps, into either, consumerist or participatory engagement. Whilst analysing the interviews and concept maps of the senior managers, I created a table and added descriptive headings within each type of engagement, for example, 'audience', so building on Andrew and Turner's paper to develop a framework that applied to Bolton at Home's engagement strategy (section 5.4.7). I sought feedback on the newly developed framework from senior managers and the Neighbourhood Management Team as I wanted to ensure that they could recognise the two distinct categories of engagement, the headings and explanations I had created, and could understand how it related to Bolton at Home and their practice. This was necessary validation for both the concept and content of the framework and assisted with other aspects of the research, such as the development of the Neighbourhood Management Team model of practice (section 6.1) and my model of Transformative Engagement Practice for Sustainable Regeneration (section 8.1.2).

After these conversations with Bolton at Home staff, I was confident that the framework offered a valid theoretical explanation and could be used as a practical tool for identifying and developing community engagement strategy in Bolton at Home. I was interested to find out if the framework could be applied to the community engagement strategies of other social housing organisations involved with regeneration. In order to encourage reflection with other housing associations, I revised the detail contained in the framework, to make it more generic and less situated in Bolton at Home activity. For example, I removed UCAN centres as an example of Participatory engagement and took the framework to two other Housing associations - Plus Dane and City West Housing Trust - to share with their Engagement Managers to encourage reflection about engagement in their own organisations and ask for their views on its relevance. As a result of these conversations, I produced the more generic version of the Consumerist and Participatory Community Engagement Strategy Framework. I see this as a theoretical contribution to knowledge that has enabled housing associations to reconsider their approach to interacting with local people when delivering regeneration (section 8.1.1).

9.2 Critical analysis of the language positions adopted

I was conscious of the meanings behind regeneration, community and engagement in section 2, the Literature Review; however, to explain my position, there is also a need to define the normative values contained within the terms ‘neighbourhood management’ and ‘consumerist’, especially when exploring the work with people living in deprived neighbourhoods. Neighbourhood management is a policy term created by the New Labour government to depict the role of practitioners working in poor neighbourhoods, to join up services and engage with local people. During the Senior Managers and Neighbourhood Management Team inquiry streams, I asked a number of Bolton at Home staff about their view of the term and the policy emphasis. Some were critical of the implied suggestion that deprived areas could be ‘managed’ by identifying gaps in resources and that services could be provided to fill them. For example, one member of the Neighbourhood Management Team, suggested Neighbourhood Management is:

“A construct that’s been developed by middle-class people in order to make us feel like we are a team working in the right direction!”

(Neighbourhood Management Team member interview Jan 2011)

When adopting a critical position regarding the term ‘consumerist’, as discussed in section 2.1.1, there is debate about whether the users of public services can be classed as ‘consumers’. This is because, in most instances, local people cannot choose between different service providers as the element of choice does not exist. This is evident in some parts of the social housing sector where one registered social landlord dominates a geographical area, and this means that, if a person wants a social housing property in a certain area, they do not have choice regarding their social landlord. The term consumerist has also been challenged as having a narrow definition of engagement and empowerment, concerned with ‘having a voice within services’ (Starkey 2003). Authors suggest it is “primarily aimed at achieving improvement in efficiency, effectiveness and economy along the lines of consumer satisfaction with the delivery of a service” (Forbes and Sashidharan 1997: 485). Beresford (2002) argues that there are ideological and philosophical differences to democratic and consumerist approaches when involving users in service development. He contends that consumerist approaches emphasise state and market interventions and are, mainly, based on consultative methods of involvement. Although a consumerist approach to participation can have effective outcomes for users, I view it as “managerialist and instrumental in purpose without any commitment to the redistribution of power or control” (Beresford 2002: 97). Given this analysis, I was convinced that Beresford’s depiction of ‘consumerist’ would suit the engagement strategy type, as depicted in the Consumerist and Participatory Framework, in that is limited and professionally defined in nature (section 5.4.7).

9.3 Theoretical work undertaken but not yet discussed

This section expands and clarifies the discussion on the role of key theories about the nature of power that influenced the inquiry streams addressed in earlier chapters. Theory provides the basis of explanations in research and for critical theorists, “the ultimate test of the fruitfulness of a theory is its ability to reach out in society, mobilize people and give rise to new practices” (Gustavsen 2008: 433-4). This relates to my use of the term ‘transcontextuality’ in section 3.5.6, where one purpose of theory generated by research is to add value to practice and which shows how theory generated by a single case can be tested elsewhere (as with the development of the Consumerist and Participatory Framework section 8.1.1).

The other way I worked with theory was to define the scope of the inquiry and its boundaries, and to bring in theoretical texts and frameworks, during action research cycles, to help make sense and understand the local experience. Following Githens (2009), the theoretical lenses, through which I viewed the data, emerged as the project progressed, rather than being predetermined before I started the inquiry process.

Understanding theories of power was of fundamental importance for me when considering community engagement, relationships and the nature of participation in research, service delivery and policy. This enabled me to make sense of power relations in a team, organisation and neighbourhood and the wider societal norms that govern policy and decisions about people's lives, particularly those who live in deprived areas. I chose to focus on theories of power and texts that assessed power within research, community and organisational contexts and influenced the development of the inquiry streams. These theories are Foucault's (1980) understanding of power as relational networks, Gramsci's (1971) concept of hegemony and Scott's (1992) ideas about resistance and insubordination.

Using historical analysis, Foucault (1980) depicts power as something that is diffuse and intangible, something that is changeable and is not connected with an institution or a particular structure, as it exists everywhere. For him, power and knowledge are inextricably linked and result in domination of certain groups over others. Rather than asking who has power and how they intend to use it, Foucault suggests the authentic question is about "studying power at the point where its intention, if it has one, is completely invested in its real and effective practices" (Foucault 1980: 97). Power is not one dimensional but indeterminate, mediated and exercised through many discourses in society and, as Beresford (2002) suggests, everyone, however marginalised, has the opportunity to gain access to power by changing the discourse or creating an alternative one.

Another theory of power is Gramsci's (1971) theory of hegemony and social control. This resonated with me throughout the Residents inquiry stream. Hegemony is the "acceptance by the majority of those belonging to the subordinate class to the moral and cultural values and world outlook of the ruling class" (Simon 1977:82). This indoctrination is built upon 'active consent', where marginalised people are accepting and complicit in their own subordination. Social structures and civil society enable power to be maintained through the establishment and upholding of dominant ideological positions within civil society, with the support of the state (Gramsci 1971). This has implications for regeneration and,

specifically, engagement, as discussed in section 2.1, where other literature suggests that the effectiveness of participation is rarely questioned. This has led some to argue that public participation is a hegemonic project where participation structures have contributed to an ideology of common interests and “provided an arena for the management of social conflict” (Muir 2004: 962).

There are challenges to the idea of hegemony as a way in which power relations are created and managed in society. Scott’s (1992) proposal is that the concept of hegemony oversimplifies the divide between rich and poor and that it is a mistake to ignore the contradictions and distinctions that exist within and between each group. Throughout history, narratives of insubordination from slavery, serfdom and the caste system have emerged where the powerless talk to each other (Scott 1992). This means questions can be asked about the legitimacy of the dominant cultures and values in society and how they are implemented at a local or individual level. Scott’s suggestion is that these narratives can inform our thinking about power, hegemony, resistance and insubordination. He contends that “subordinates in large-scale structures of domination nevertheless have a fairly extensive social existence outside the immediate control of the dominant” (Scott 1992: xi).

These theories were useful to me when exploring the role of organisations in regeneration, the relationships between residents and service providers and how many aspects of residents’ lives in Brightmet were controlled by agencies such as Bolton at Home in terms of their property and Job Centre Plus, with regard to employment and benefits. For example, people interact with agencies or contracted organisations that make judgements about whether they are fit to work or trying hard enough to find work. With the introduction of Welfare Reform and increased use of sanctions from national government to control behaviour, people on benefits are facing increasing pressure to live their lives according to certain cultural values. This is demonstrated in a recent example of literature for social housing tenants from Eastland Homes in Manchester, where residents were asked how their spending priorities were affecting their ability to pay their rent (Plate 6). This received widespread criticism and Eastlands were forced to apologise for the patronising and clumsy tone of the newsletter and implication that tenants were unable to budget (Britton 2013).



Plate 6 Eastlands publicity from Daily Mail website 13th March 2013

9.4 Critique of the blended action research approach

This section discusses the use of a blended approach using different types of action research, compares the types used and provides a critical analysis of this approach and the lessons learnt. There are many different methodological approaches within the family tree of action research, with huge variation between the nature and purpose of action (Herr and Anderson 2005). I chose to blend four types of action research in a pluralist approach rather than use one type of action research or develop a hybrid model. The research was developed through negotiating between Participatory Action Research, Insider Action Research and Co-operative Inquiry, and Systemic Action Research, providing an overarching framework to draw the approaches together, coherently. I determined this to be the best approach to enable the development of the research and align with the needs of the different participants or settings and the three interlinked inquiry aims;

- How can engagement practice be developed by a team of practitioners in a community setting? (Team Inquiry Stream);
- How can strategy and senior management better support the needs of residents and practitioners and develop practice? (Senior Managers Inquiry Stream);
- What are the concerns of people living in a neighbourhood and how can agencies improve their response to these suggestions in order to provide sustainable regeneration outcomes for communities? (Residents Inquiry Stream).

Participatory Action Research was a way for me to explore community engagement in regeneration from a resident perspective, with collaborative intent in a neighbourhood setting. As a result of insight into conducting Participatory Action Research, I developed the Residents Inquiry Stream. However, it is important to note that when considering

Participatory Action Research, my emphasis was community-based social action as this aligned to critical community development values and practice I considered important in community engagement in regeneration. This emphasis supports the Southern tradition of Participatory Action Research, which has the aim of emancipation, social change and transformation achieved through collective critical education and research, mainly in the developing world (Fals Borda 1998).

While based at Bolton at Home and attempting to encourage senior managers to develop strategy to support community engagement practice, I needed an approach to action research that would facilitate this. Insider Action Research was an important methodological influence because it echoed the role and positionality I was experiencing while conducting the Senior Managers inquiry stream. The main aspects of Insider Action Research that concerned me were the roles undertaken by researchers who are also paid by the organisation they are investigating, and how to analyse and manage power relations (Coghlan and Brannick 2010). I also developed my action research spiral for all inquiry streams with the inclusion of the pre-understanding stage that came from Coghlan and Brannick's (2005) work about Insider Action Research (3.6.1). The majority of studies I read that had used Insider Action Research focused on changing working practice of individuals, rather than a more collaborative focus, which is what was needed with the Neighbourhood Management Team.

The principles and activity of Cooperative Inquiry appeared to relate to my work with the Neighbourhood Management Team because they were a self-contained group of practitioners willing to examine their own practice to generate knowledge and improve practice for the benefit of residents in the Brightmet neighbourhood. Echoing Baldwin's (2002) rationale for the use of Cooperative Inquiry, I considered that the process would reflect the complexities of the Neighbourhood Management Team's working practices that had little reference within established literature. However, the research I reviewed that used Cooperative Inquiry (McArdle 2002) did not go far enough, in my opinion, to feed into wider change efforts across organisations that may have had more impact on the members of the Cooperative Inquiry group. This is a similar view to Baldwin who suggested that, after her study had taken place, "there was little to suggest that the organisation has learned the importance of participatory approaches to policy and practice development" (Baldwin 2002: 234). I have produced Table 12 to articulate the differences between the approaches and how each was beneficial to a certain aspect of the inquiry.

Type of AR/ characteristics	Participatory Action Research (southern) Residents Inquiry Stream 1	Insider Action Research Senior Managers Inquiry Stream 2	Co-operative Inquiry Team Inquiry Stream 3	Systemic Action Research: Development of the inquiry streams
<i>Goal of the research</i>	Empowerment of marginalised people, critical education, social justice, change status quo	Improve performance, effectiveness and practice of employees and organisations	Develop practice through knowledge generation and reflection to benefit clients or customers.	Develop different perspectives, holistic solutions to improve practice and create change
<i>Setting</i>	Community	Organisation	Organisation	Organisation and Community
<i>Role of researcher</i>	Activist, critical teacher	Employee, researcher, evaluator	Facilitator, co-researcher	Facilitator, catalyst
<i>Positionality of researcher and research</i>	External position and/or community based researcher/s	Insider	External researcher working with ‘insiders’ at the same organisation	Can be policy maker, practitioner, service user as insiders, external academic tends to initiate
<i>Participants</i>	Marginalised people	Not always necessary but, if collaborative, then colleagues, senior managers, clients are participants	Group of people usually at the same level sharing common aims or roles	Depends on scope of inquiry and level of analysis, the idea is to encourage as many people as possible to form networked groups
<i>Level of participation by participants</i>	Full ownership of all parts of the process intended	Topic and focus decided by a researcher. Could be limited to contributing data, change effort likely to occur if greater involvement.	Co-researchers involved with data collection, analysis, reflection and evaluation of process.	Depends on scope of inquiry and level of analysis
<i>Level of analysis</i>	Group, community (2 nd and 3 rd person)	Individual, group, organisation (1 st – 3 rd person, it depends)	Individual and group (1 st and 2 nd person)	1 st , 2 nd , 3 rd , inter group, inter-organisation

Table 12 Descriptions of the four types of Action Research used in the study

Systemic Action Research, therefore, provided an overarching framework for ‘whole systems change’ to link all types of action research and the different purposes of the inquiry within all contexts. The focus of Systemic Action Research is broad and can include both organisational and social change because it is a “process through which communities and organisation can adapt and respond to constantly changing environments” (Burns 2007: 1). I was interested in how numerous perspectives could be included within such an action research process that was attuned to issues of power, policy, practice and social norms (section 3.6.2).

There are a number of challenges in developing a methodological pluralism using these four types of action research. Firstly, it is inherently difficult to attempt to keep all purposes and contexts of each type in balance, giving where possible, equal weight to all, so no one dominates. At one stage during the research, I was conscious that the majority of my time and energy was concerned with the Senior Managers’ Inquiry Stream and I felt as though not as much focus was directed at the other two inquiry streams.

Secondly, the need for clarity about purpose of each inquiry was very important at every stage, during each action research cycle. Although this was an emergent and evolving aspect of the research process, I needed to communicate to participants, regularly, about the nature of the inquiry and what it meant for them. They, also, needed to be made aware of why generating multiple perspectives within different settings was significant to their inquiry stream and that I was not seen to favour one inquiry over another.

Thirdly, at times, researchers employing a blended approach may need to manage relationships and be aware of the potential conflict of interests that could exist between types of action research. This can be shown in my work by members of the Neighbourhood Management Team asking me what colleagues in the team and certain senior managers had said in interviews. It was vital for me to maintain my integrity and commitment to ethical principles of confidentiality and anonymity and not be drawn into organisational or neighbourhood politics.

Fourthly, using a blended approach could present the researcher with a risk of trying to do too much within the time limits of a Doctorate or research project. I recognised that I could be accused of watering down each type of action research by attempting to use all of them in one inquiry. My response to this is that, because I am confident about my level of knowledge about each type, it was possible for me to develop an action research process that was greater than the sum of its parts, rather than lesser versions of each.

A final reflection is that I created a complicated research approach that, perhaps, I would not repeat in future. At times, I did feel the need to neatly fit into a specific action research box and was aware that I was becoming more preoccupied with methodology than I might have done had this not been a PhD. However, what I feel is important is that I read very widely to find relevant methodological processes that could relate to the research and, when one alone did not suit, I recognised the benefits of developing a pluralist approach that responded to the complexities of the inquiry.

9.5 Clarification of my epistemological position

I have reflected on how my philosophical and epistemological position developed and expanded beyond the Participatory paradigm discussed in section 3.3. An additional two paradigms have formed my worldview and these are Critical Theory and Constructivist paradigms (Lincoln, Lynham and Guba 2011). Miller, Baird, Littlefield, Kofinas, Chapin and Redman (2008) discuss how researchers can move beyond subject boundaries and ‘epistemic core’ to develop pluralist approaches to knowledge and that “both epistemology and methods emerge from interaction” (Lincoln 2001 in Ferreyra 2006: 680). This pluralism contributed some key elements to the inquiry, as it enabled a more complete understanding of complex issues and methodological influences brought to bear at specific times for certain purposes, and between the researcher and participants as described in section 3.5.3. I will now discuss how these three paradigms developed my epistemological position and influenced the inquiry.

As discussed in section 3.2.3, a Participatory paradigm advocates the conception of the nature of knowledge based on an extended epistemology where different types of knowledge including propositional, practical, experiential and presentational are valued equally and where the function of research is to generate different ways of knowing about lived experience. Park (2001) has the view that the aim of participatory research is to generate two types of representational knowledge, (one functional and one interpretative), relational knowledge and reflective knowledge to “bring about changes by improving the material circumstances of people” (Park 2001: 84). This is drawn from critical theory and Freire’s (1970/1996) work about critical consciousness, where “concerted engagement in change producing activity requires conscious reflection on the part of the actors involved” (Park 2001: 88).

I also developed a strong affinity with Critical Theory such as that discussed by Marcuse (1964) who suggests that knowledge can be constructed by discourses within society based on power relations (May 2001). As such, for critical theorists, “there is no neutral point from which to stand back and perceive social reality ‘objectively’” (Hughes and Sharrock 1997: 133). This was an important basis of the Residents Inquiry Stream where I attempted to create empowering processes and avoid reproducing existing power relations within the research. I recognised this throughout my research and issues of power remained at the heart of understanding the inquiry process and my role within it. Critical Theory places great importance on research exploring and creating social change and methodological approaches tend to be dialectical and dialogic, where the researcher is an advocate and a ‘transformative intellectual’ (Lincoln *et al.* 2011). As discussed in section 3.5.3, it was my conscious intention to use my position within the Neighbourhood Management Team to effect positive change for residents of Brightmet using a critical, discursive and reflective process.

I was drawn to the Constructivist paradigm, as its proponents suggests that knowledge, reality and meaning are created individually and, also, can be co-created on a collective basis. The aim of research for Constructivists is to develop a more thorough understanding of the way in which the world and phenomena are conceptualised and meaning is developed by individuals as “we put together our own personal reality” (Guba and Lincoln 1985: 73). Constructivists support a subjective epistemology, where “the nature of knowledge is described as socially constructed” (Lincoln *et al.* 2011: 107). This influenced my interdisciplinary approach to generate various types of knowledge, through the blending of action research and use of different research methods and analysis. Within Constructivism, the researcher is described as ‘a passionate participant’ and the facilitator of reconstructing multiple voices (Lincoln *et al.* 2011), where control of the process is shared between the researcher and participants and knowledge is co-created through the research. This and the use of various methods to share control of the process and gather multiple perspectives led to the development of the three inquiry streams. An appreciation of the use of a variety of methodological approaches to provide opportunities for discussion, and interaction between researcher and participant, as well as through observation and analysis of texts and language, enabled me to develop multiple research methods such as interviewing and concept mapping.

In summary, the Participatory, Critical Theory and Constructivist paradigms led to the development of my current epistemological position. At this point in time, I consider the nature of knowledge to be both subjectively developed, as a result of the power and values in society, which affect our worldview but, also, objective, because we can change our own realities and, as such, “we choose our reality and our knowing of it” (Reason 1994: 332). Knowledge is not to be discovered based on a singular version of ‘the truth’, but co-created here through a dialogue between participants and researchers where multiple perspectives are explored. The purpose of generating knowledge for me is to develop understanding, articulate power relations in society and create the conditions for social change to improve the material circumstances of marginalised people.

9.6 Lessons learnt from undertaking the research

I learnt a tremendous amount from undertaking this research and have chosen, in this section, to focus on four aspects. Firstly, it was a challenge to learn how to present the complex nature of the research, inherent with an interlinked systemic approach, in the writing up, so that the account was authentic but simplified. It took a lot of time after collecting data to construct the narrative of the dissertation in a linear format that remained faithful to events as they occurred. The reality was that undertaking the inquiry was much more complicated and messy than depicted in my dissertation (as alluded to in section 3.5.2). As a visual learner, I found a lot of drawing and whiteboard scribbling was helpful, and necessary to clarify my intentions and an example is shown in Plate 7.

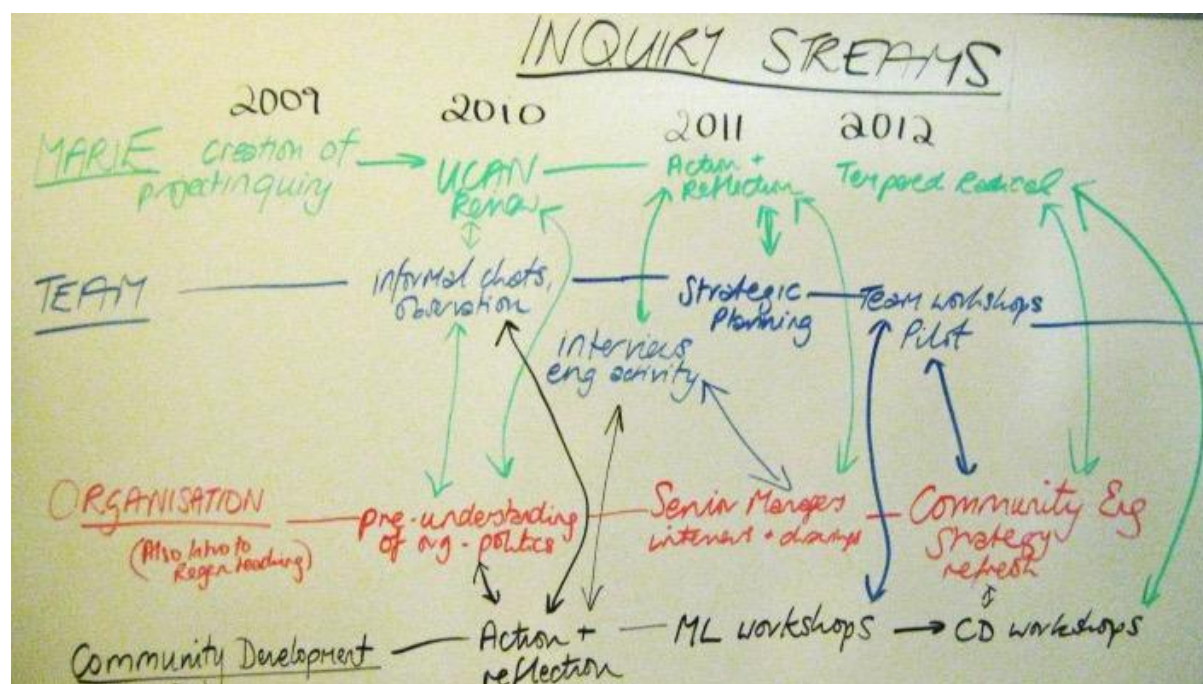


Plate 7 Articulation of the Inquiry Stream and links between with timeline

Secondly, I discovered the significant boundaries, dynamics and connections between levels and the inquiry streams. I learnt how to traverse from ‘my’ to ‘our’ (Marshall 2011: 250) with regard to my PhD and the practice of Bolton at Home staff and to encourage effective participation and ownership of the process by the Neighbourhood Management Team, residents and senior managers.

Thirdly, I acknowledge that the support I received from Bolton at Home, the Neighbourhood Management Team and the Neighbourhood Manager and my supervisors was of paramount importance. It meant that I could adopt research strategies and approaches that shielded me and the inquiry from pressures of the organisation and enabled me to have the freedom and autonomy to develop the research as I saw fit. This meant that I needed to trust my own instincts and follow an iterative and evolving process, which often felt exciting and terrifying, in equal measure!

Fourthly, I found that I occupied two different worlds; one of service delivery and practice, and the other, the academic context where I needed to satisfy requirements for my doctorate. I was reassured by the shared experiences of other action researchers who also experienced similar problems with positionality and who appeared, at times, to also be pulled in various directions during the research (Humphrey 2007). I appreciated early on in the process, that to be effective and successful, “Participatory research requires high levels of flexibility, tolerance to ambiguity and long periods of time” (Ferreira 2006: 580).

I found the experience of undertaking a doctorate both enjoyable, and difficult, yet extremely rewarding. I have learned a lot about myself and other people and am proud of the work I have produced and the relationships that developed. What would I do differently if I were to conduct the research again? I would find ways to be more accepting and comfortable with managing the complexity and uncertainty of the process; I would also feel more confident in knowing that, although my research may not change the world, it can have a small and powerful impact on the people and places with whom I work.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Example of Information Sheet for Participants



Community Engagement Research Project

Participant Information Sheet – Senior Managers Interview

My name is Roz Fox and I am a researcher undertaking a PhD degree in Community Engagement in Regeneration as part of an Industrial Doctoral Scheme (IDS) project. This is a collaborative research project between Bolton at Home and the University of Bolton. The aim of the research is to work with Bolton at Home's Neighbourhood Management Team and residents to inform and develop community engagement practice in Brightmet. As part of an investigation into the practice of community engagement by Bolton at Home staff, senior managers will be interviewed for their perspectives on 'regeneration', 'neighbourhood management' and 'community engagement and empowerment'. Open questions will be asked about each concept, what it means and how such aspects can and should be applied in a community context.

During the interview, a map will be drawn by the interviewee or jointly with the researcher that visually represents the nature of community engagement, its purpose, methods and outcomes. There will also be an opportunity for the researcher to update managers on the progress of the research project and answer any questions about the project.

The interviews should last around an hour and will cover the following topics:

- Regeneration
- Neighbourhood management
- Community and Engagement
- How to ensure successful regeneration/community engagement activity?
- What is a successful outcome? How can it be measured? How can learning be captured?
- Policy context, Brightmet – challenges, good practice

The interview will be taped and transcribed, and a copy of this (print or electronic) can be sent to you on request. All information collected will be kept strictly confidential and securely in paper and electronic form for a period of up to five years after the completion of the project. Maps will be reproduced in electronic format for ease of analysis and use in publications. I would like to thank you in advance for expressing an interest in taking part in the project. You are under no obligation to proceed any further with active participation in the interview. Should you wish to continue with participation, please read the following statements, tick the appropriate boxes, and sign and return the consent form to: Roz Fox, Regeneration and Sustainable Communities, University of Bolton, Deane Road, Bolton, BL3 5AB. Email: r.fox@bolton.ac.uk Tel: 01204 300600

Appendix 2 Example of Consent Form



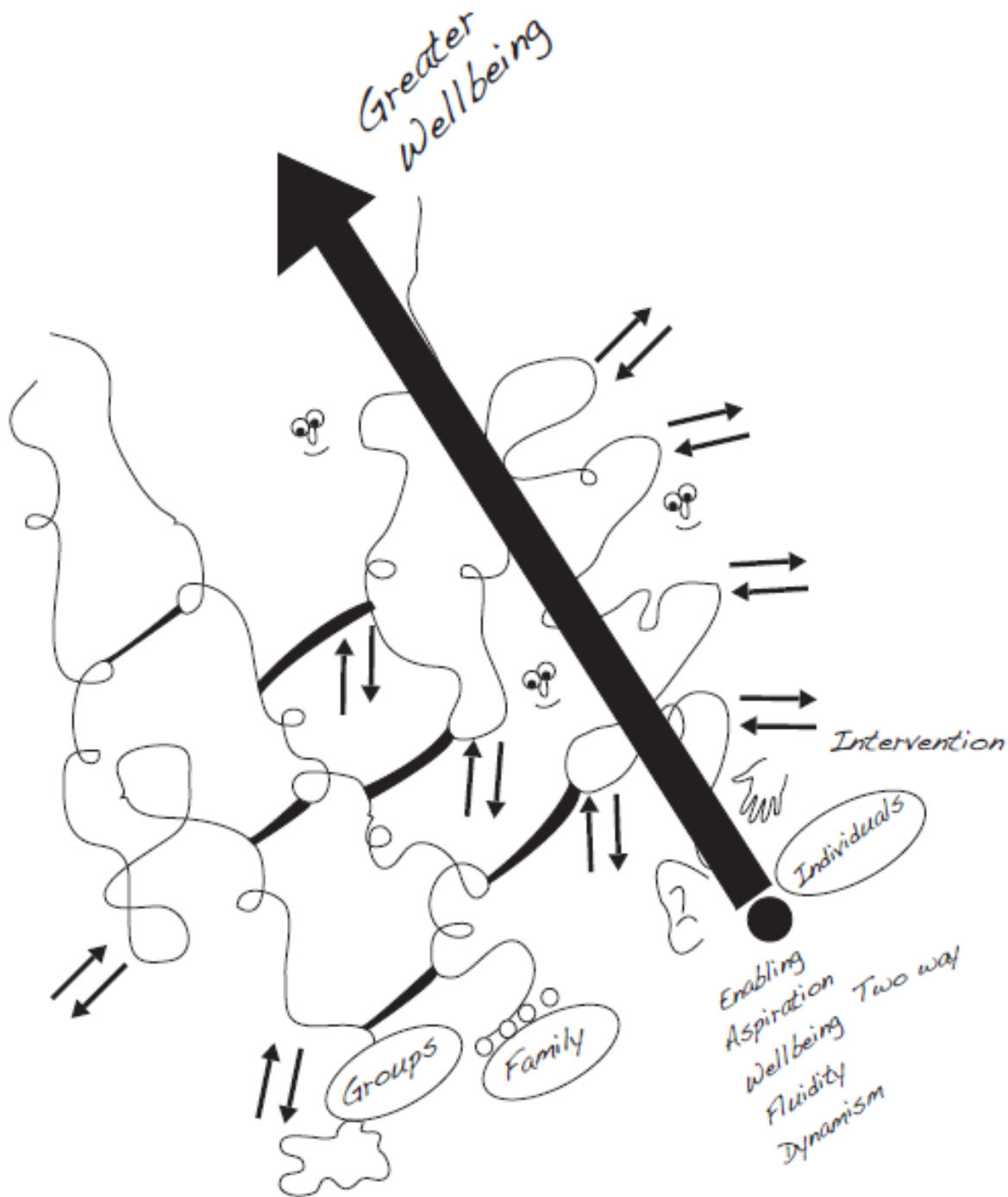
Community Engagement Research Project - Consent Form

Please tick the box

1. I have read and understood the information sheet for the attached information sheet and or have had the attached information sheet explained to me. Yes ☐ No ☐
2. I have been given opportunity to ask questions Yes ☐ No ☐
3. I agree to take part in the interview Yes ☐ No ☐
4. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the interview and any subsequent involvement at any time before publication of the results
Yes ☐ No ☐
5. I consent to the tape recording of my interview with the researcher Yes ☐ No ☐
6. I agree to the use of anonymous quotes and drawings in publications Yes ☐ No ☐
7. I agree to the use of my answers and drawings in the analysis and feedback of results from the project Yes ☐ No ☐

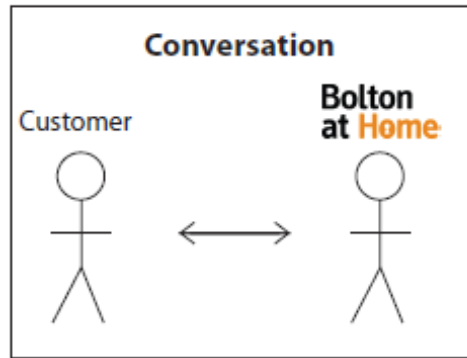
Name of participant.....Signature.....Date.....

Appendix 3 Inquiry Stream 2 Senior Managers Concept Maps 1-11



Senior Manager Community Engagement Concept Map 1

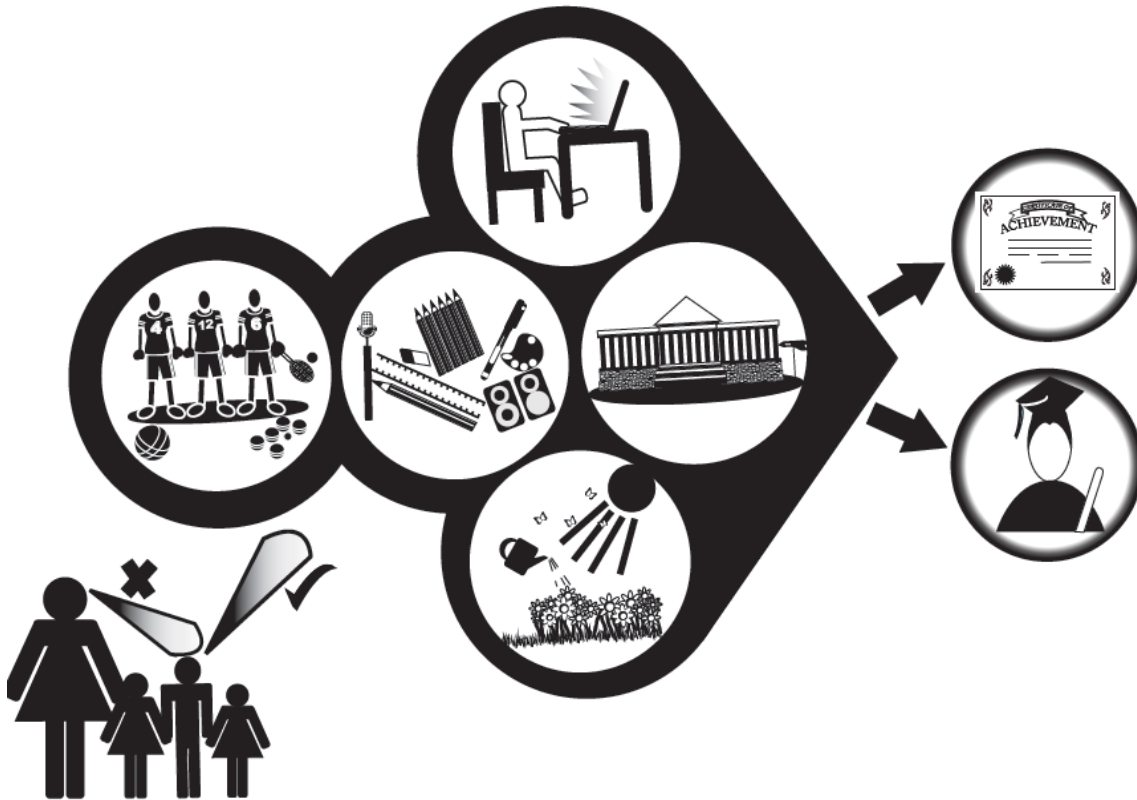
Now:



Types of Conversation

Customer		Bolton at Home
Phone	↔	Phone
Email, Social Networks & Micro Sites	↔	Email, Social Networks & Micro Sites
✓ Customer leaflets	↔	Postal
✓ Events	↔	Events - Housing percent for art
✓ Residents Association	↔	Bolton at Home
✓ Customer Committee	↔	Bolton at Home
Customers	↔	Local media - Press & Radio
✓ Customers	↔	UCAN
✓ Customers	↔	Community Researchers
✓ = Currently being done		

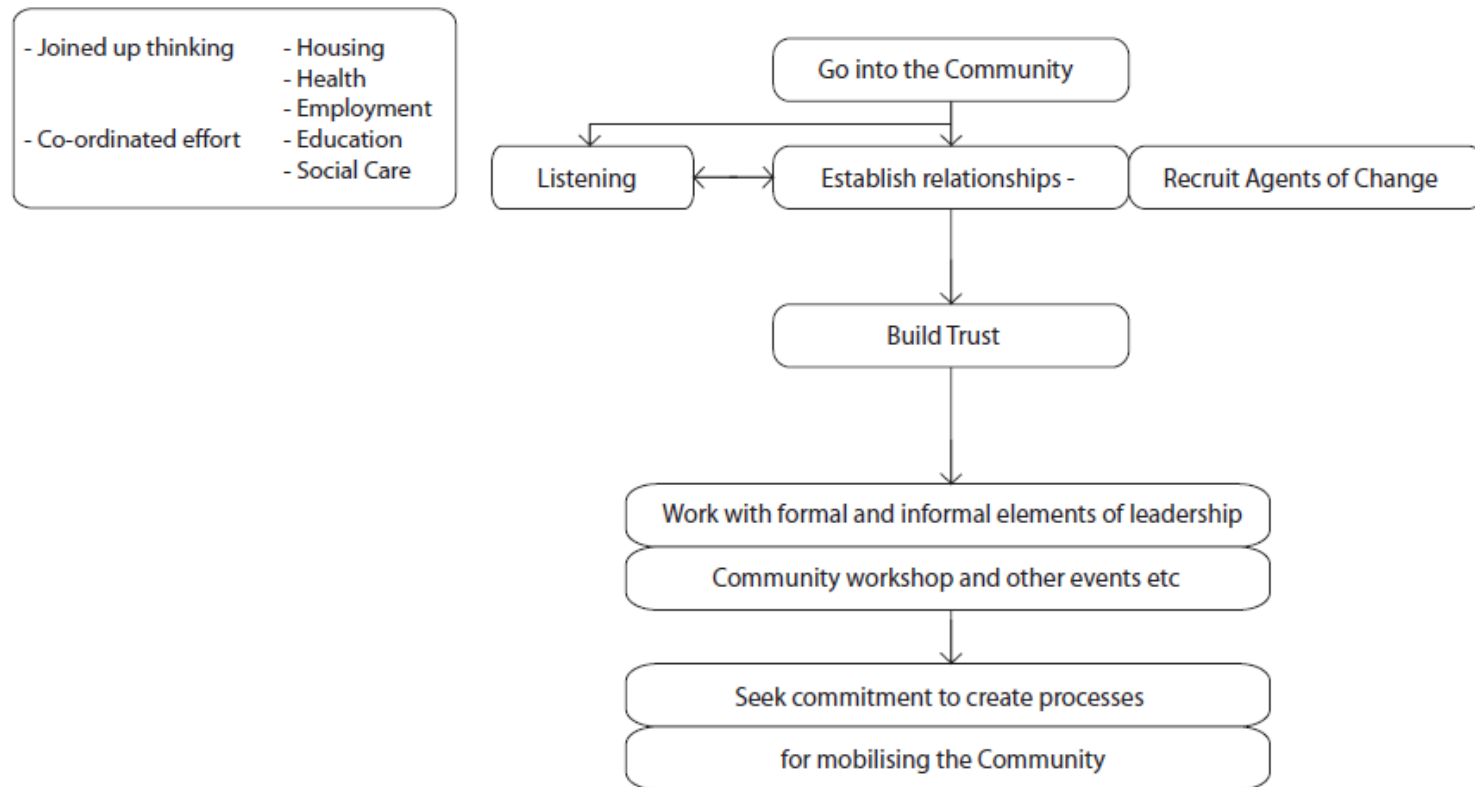
Senior Manager Community Engagement Concept Map 2



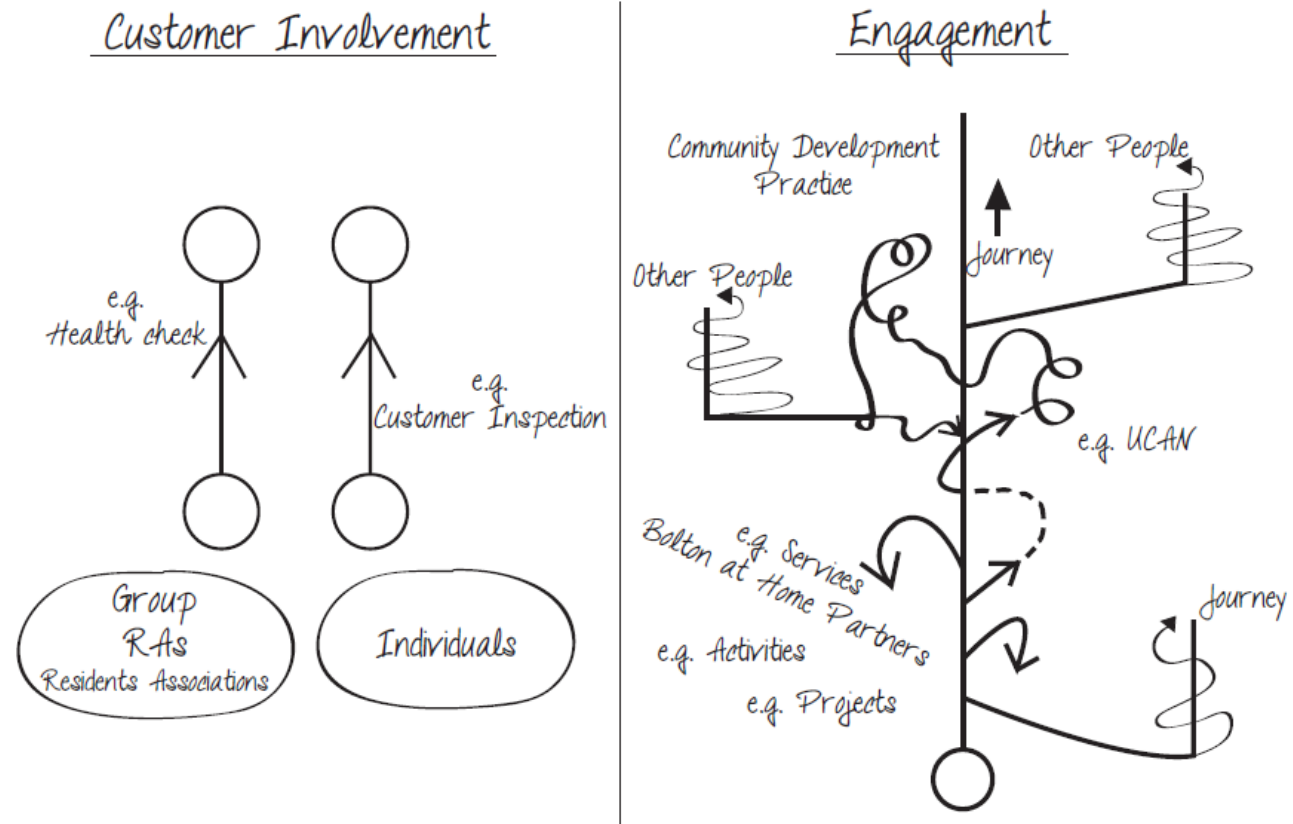
Senior Manager Community Engagement Concept Map 3

Engagement is a gradual process that begins by “giving people a glimpse of something new”, expanding people’s line of sight to move people out of their comfort zone and explore other possibilities and experiences. Mrs Jones is a single parent with three kids who has an outlook which is nothing up, always down. Bolton at Home put a number of different things up here, IT training, visits to museums, arts project, gardening project, sport. All of a sudden, she has to look up there, they have to look up there, she may decide not for me. But her kids may decide, ‘some of that is for me’. They get engaged, all of a sudden, Mrs Jones might have to attend, because she might have to watch her kids doing the sport...for me that is the engagement.

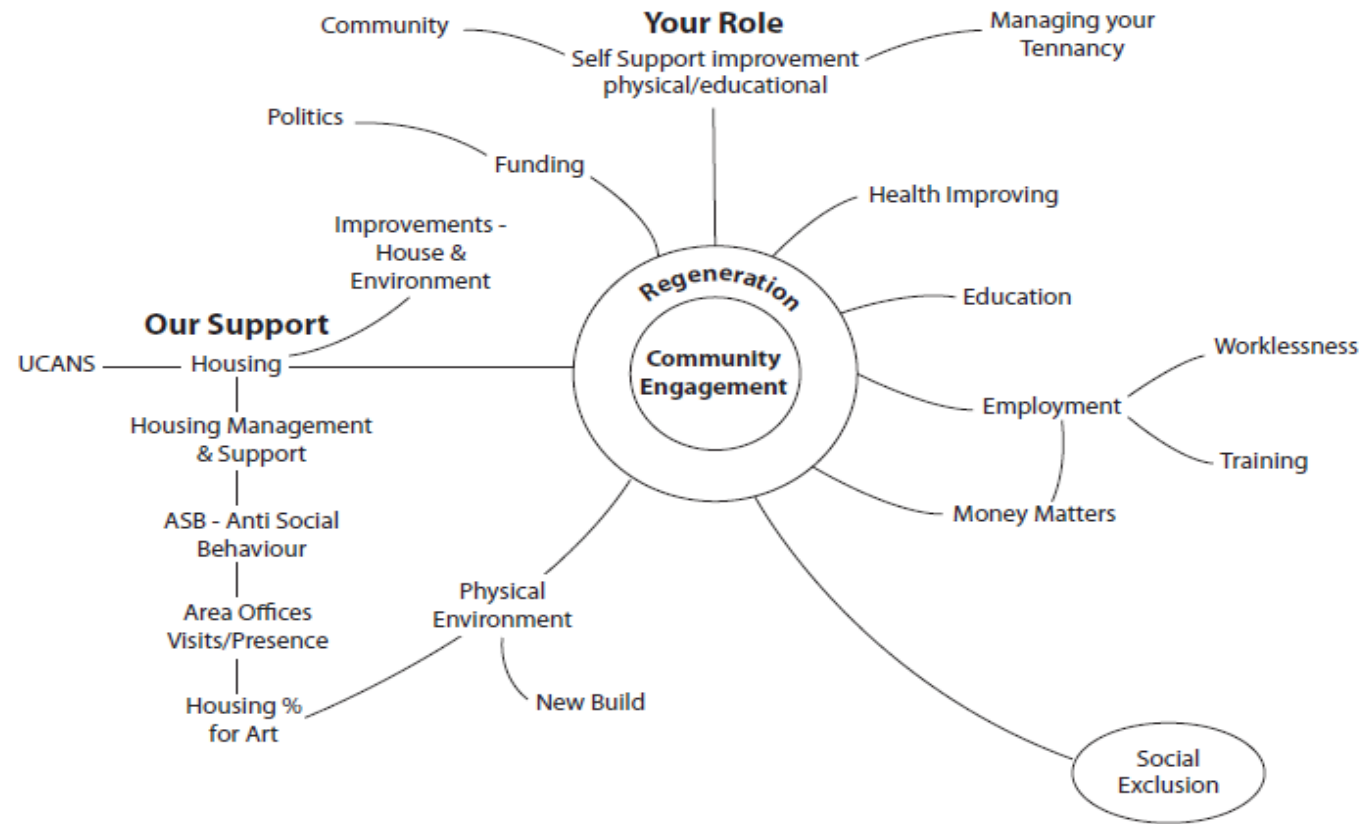
(Senior Manager interview 27.02.11)





Senior Manager Community Engagement Concept Map 4



Senior Manager Community Engagement Concept Map 5



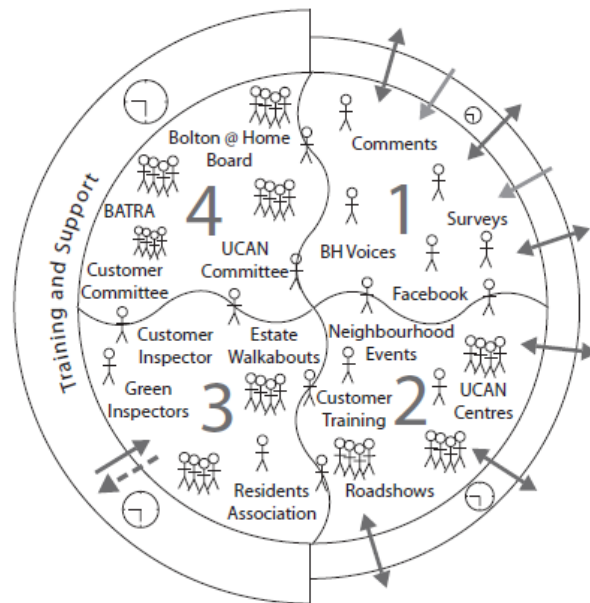
Senior Manager Community Engagement Concept Map 6

<div>  </div> <p>Who do we talk to?</p> <p>Definition of 'community' according to people themselves or issue</p> <p>Could be</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demographic • Geographic <p>Which type of community to deliver a solution for?</p>	Issue 	Economic	Social	education		
	Individual		X			
	Tenants					
	Street				X	
	Citizen	X				
	Kids					
	Parents			X		
	Social network					
	Group					
	Young people					
	families					

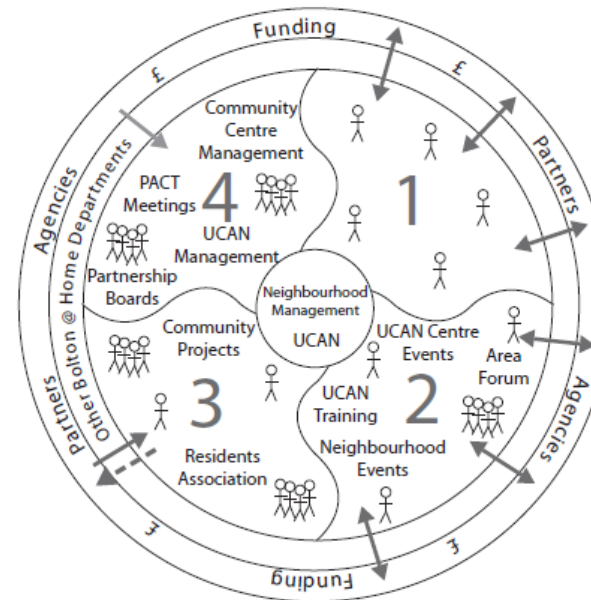
Tool box of engagement methods	
Method	
surveys	X
Residents Associations	
Customer Panels	
BATRA	
Customer Committee	
Community Researchers	X
Website	
Twitter/facebook	
Youth Outreach	

Senior Manager Community Engagement Concept Map 7

Customer Involvement



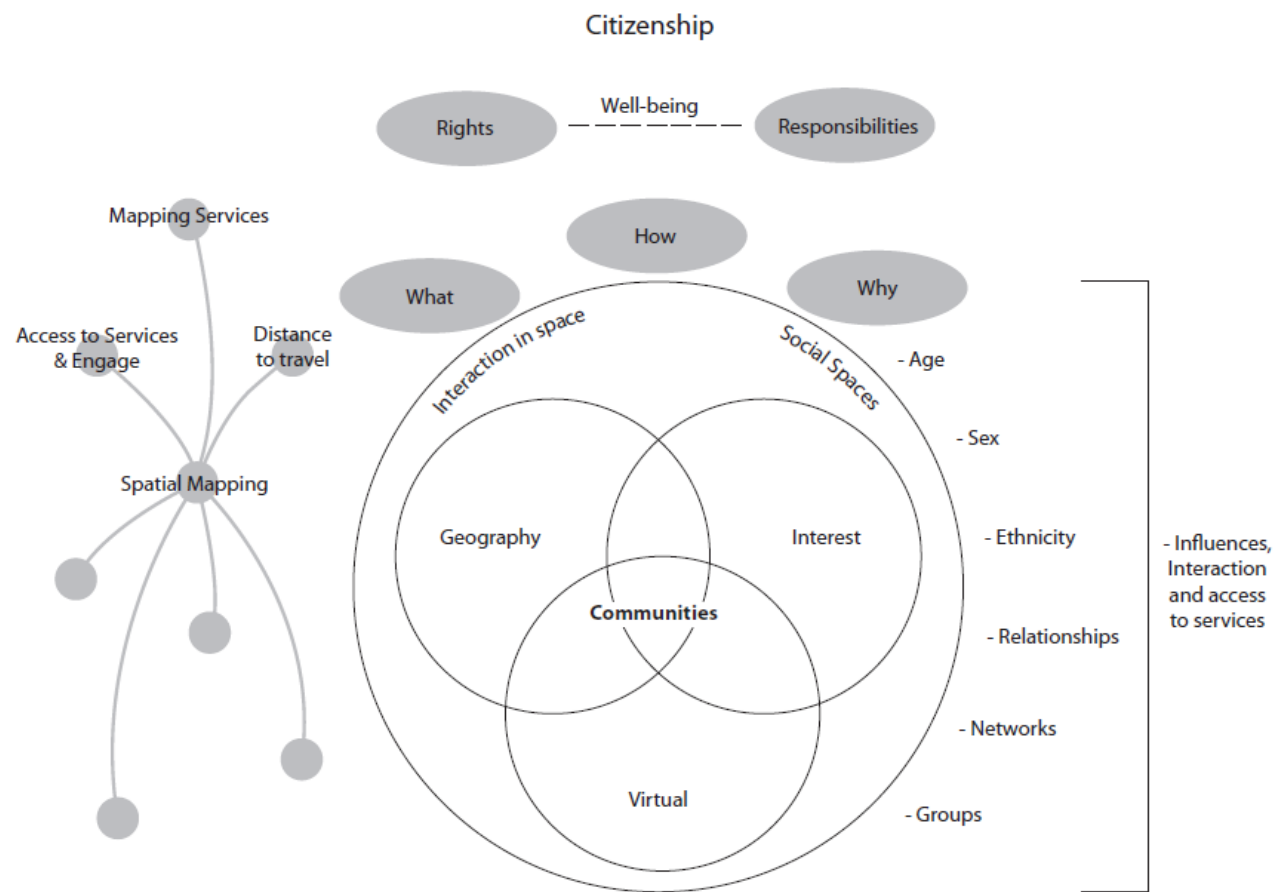
Community Development



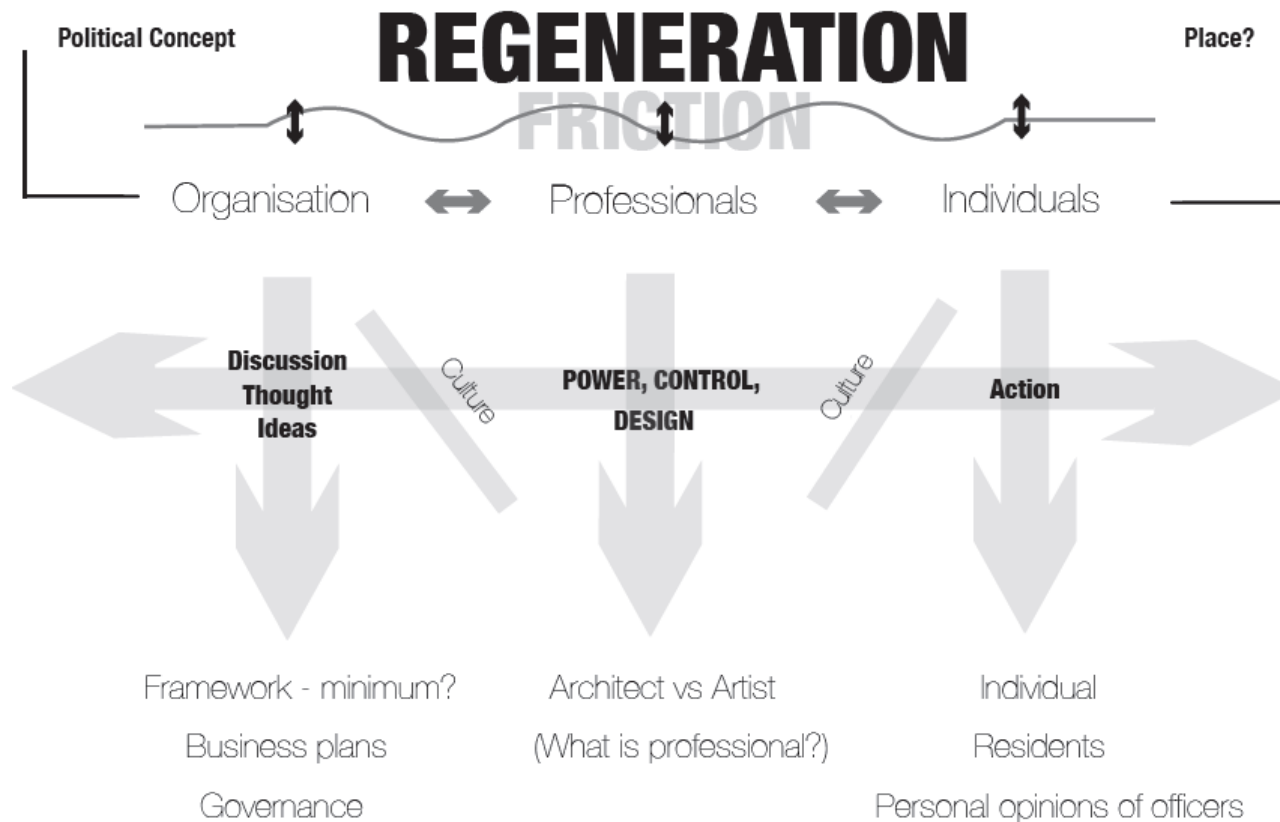
Key

- 1: Learning and Sharing
- 2: Visiting and Participating
- 3: Shaping and Reporting
- 4: Decision making and Leading

Senior Manager Community Engagement Concept Map 8

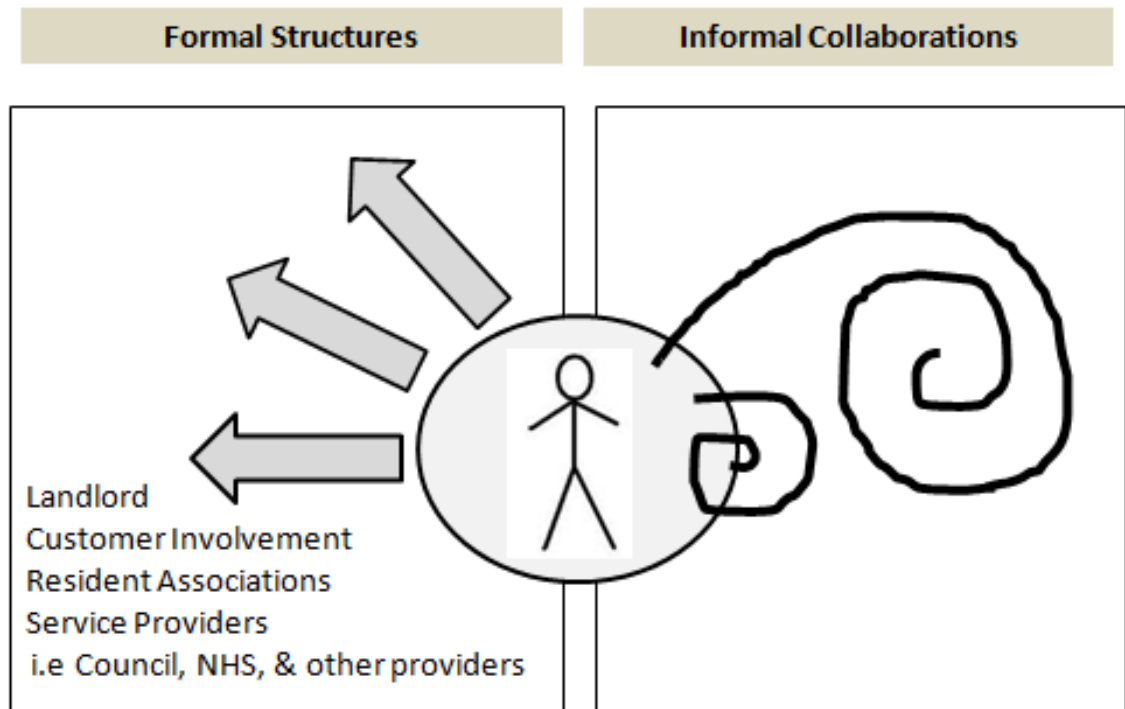


Senior Manager Community Engagement Concept Map 9



Senior Manager Community Engagement Concept Map 11

Appendix 4 Inquiry Stream 3 Neighbourhood Management Team Concept Maps 1-7



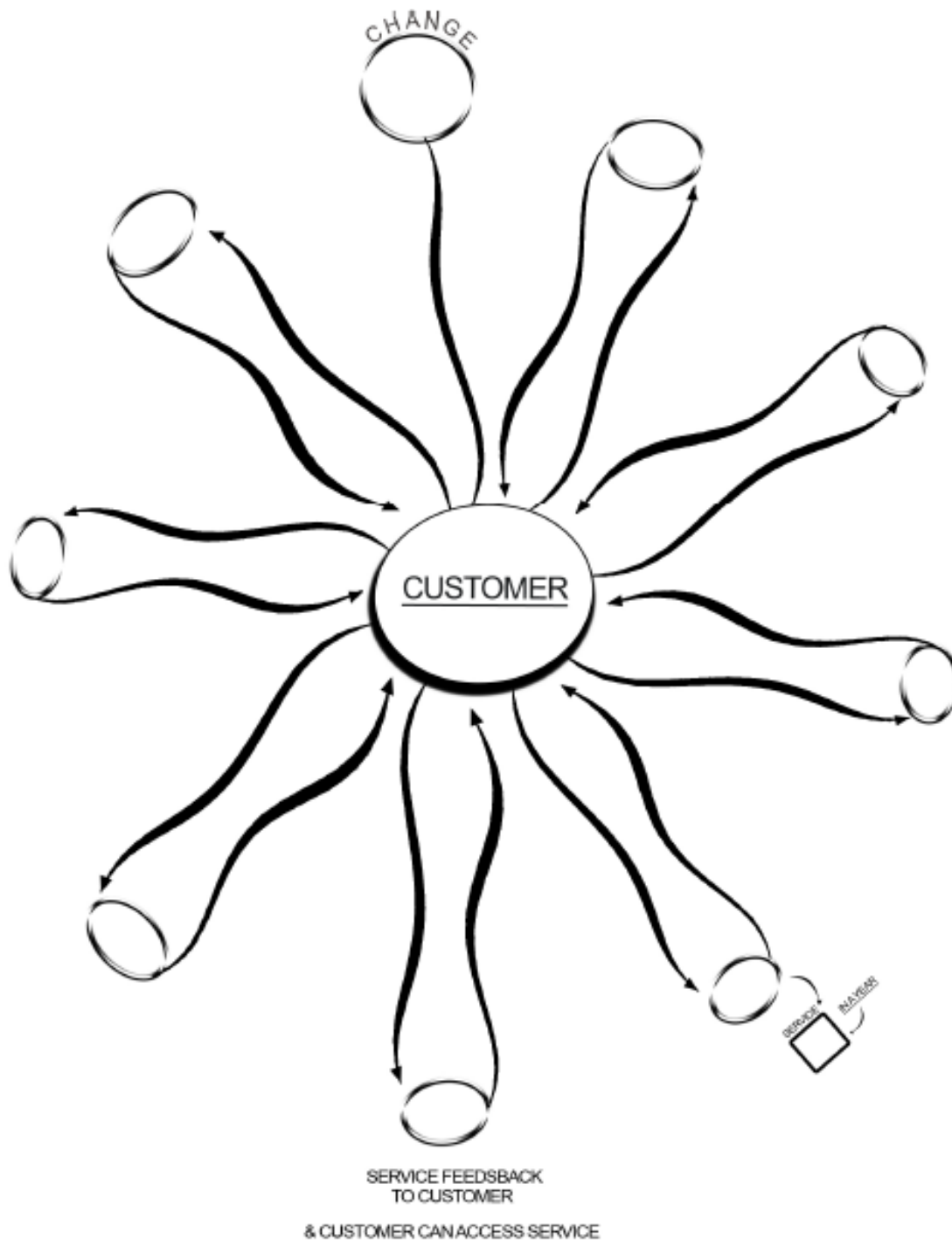
NMT member Community Engagement Concept Map 1

“One side is a service model, where the individual is a customer. As customers they can influence (in some cases) that service but essentially it’s quite a structured relationship.

The other side is shown as spirals. This is engagement where there is less structure and where the outcome isn’t necessarily about service improvement, but is about the individual progressing in some way. It’s a much freer and flexible relationship, and it’s not always clear at the start where you’ll end up. It’s led by the individual.

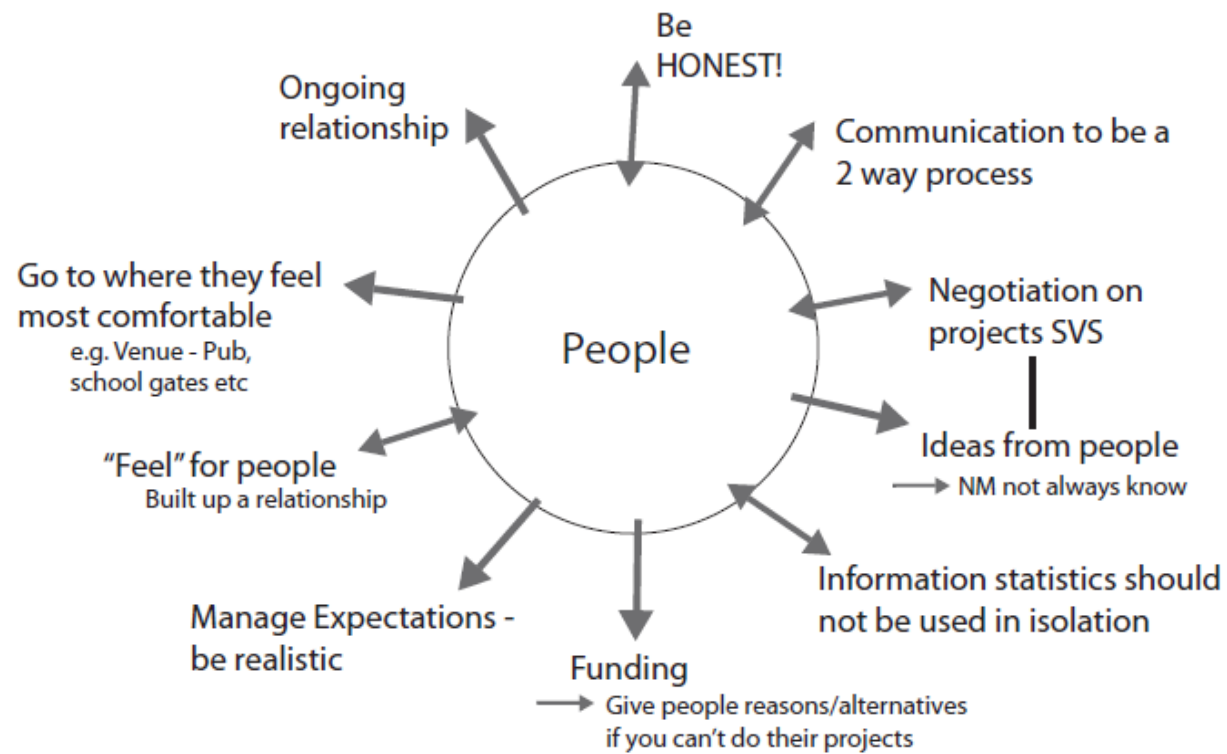
Both sides of the line can influence each other”.

(Team member email further explaining the concept map 28.03.12)

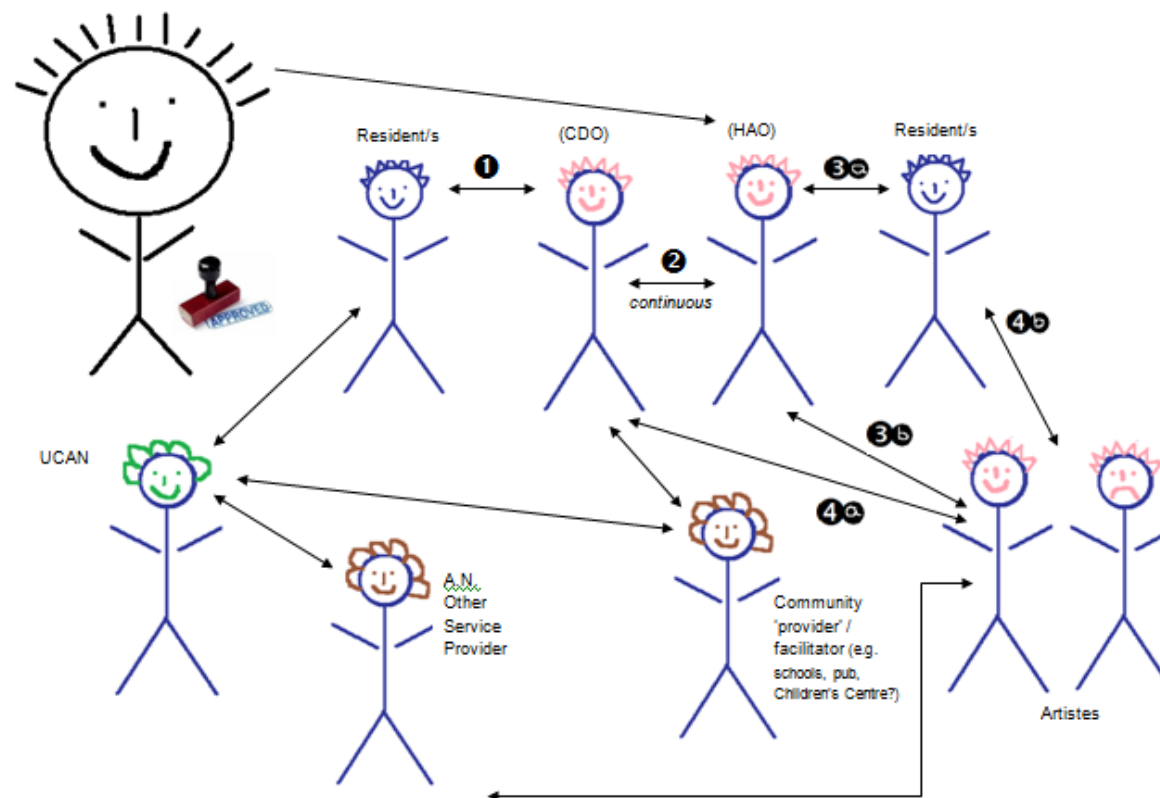


NMT member Community Engagement Concept Map 2

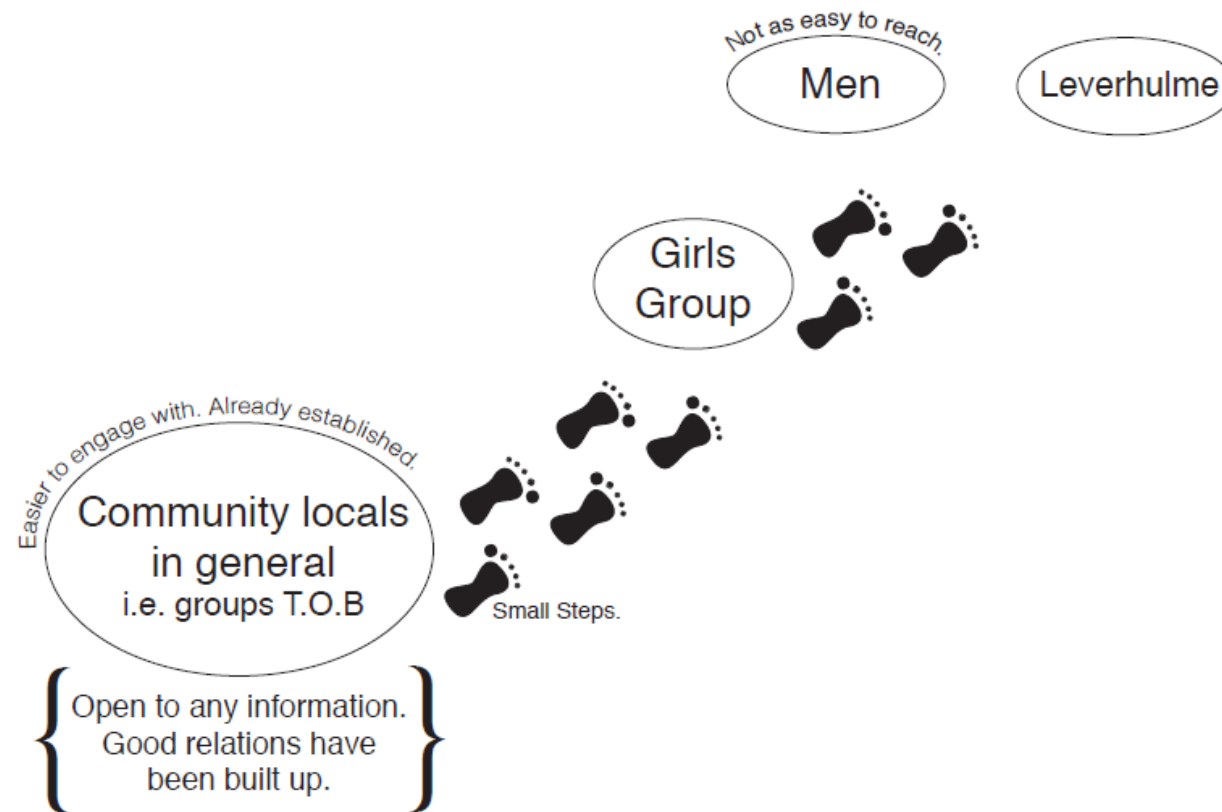
“The customer is here right in the centre; what do they need and how can we best provide it? [Services providers need to] work with passion, find people who give a shit...listen to what people are telling you... you might have to change really fundamentally what you are doing [as a service]” (Team member interview explaining concept map 22.03.12).



NMT member Community Engagement Concept Map 3



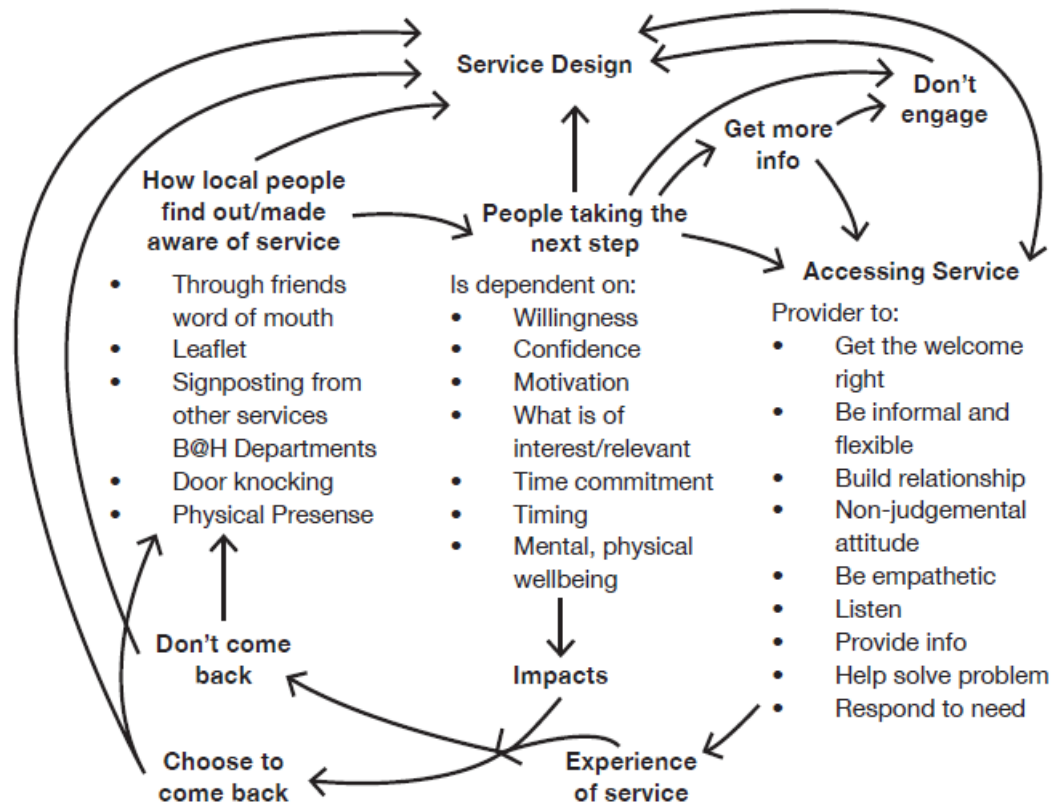
NMT member Community Engagement Concept Map 4



NMT member Community Engagement Concept Map 5



NMT member Community Engagement Concept Map 6



NMT member Community Engagement Concept Map 7

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